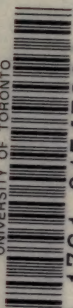


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01547264 0





Presented to the

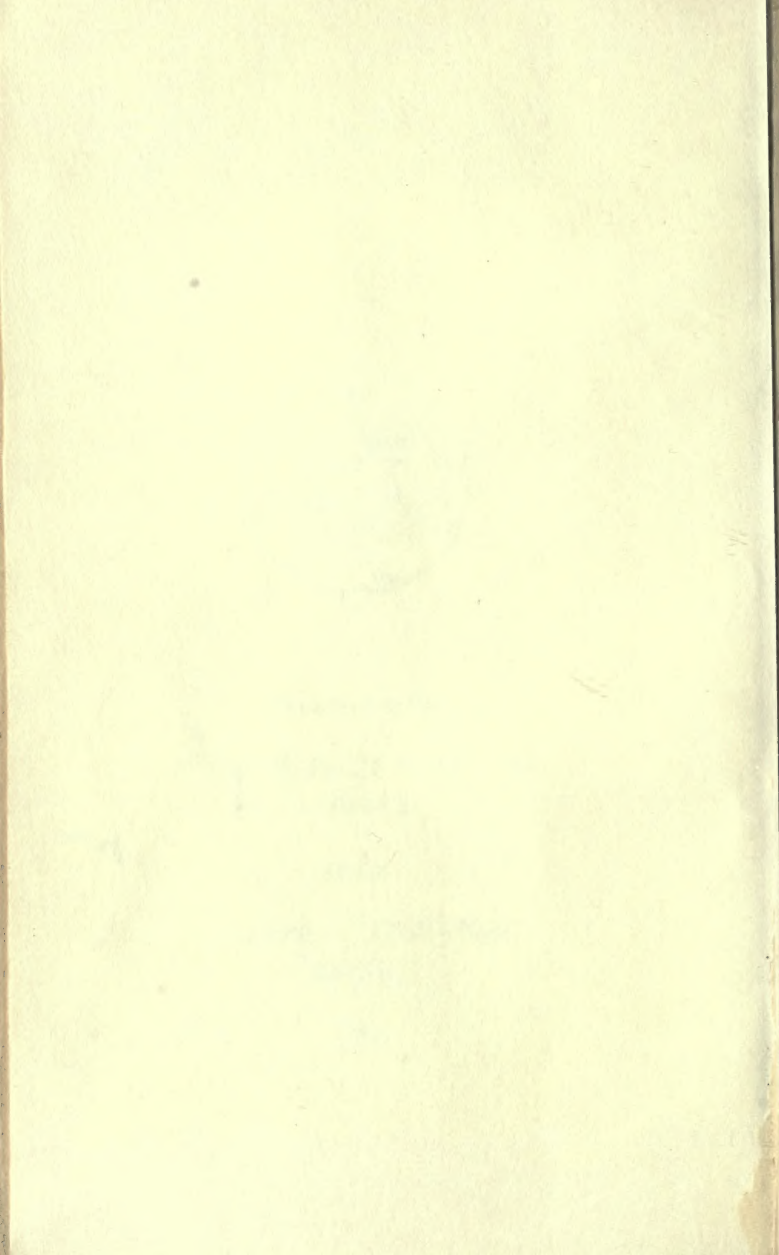
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

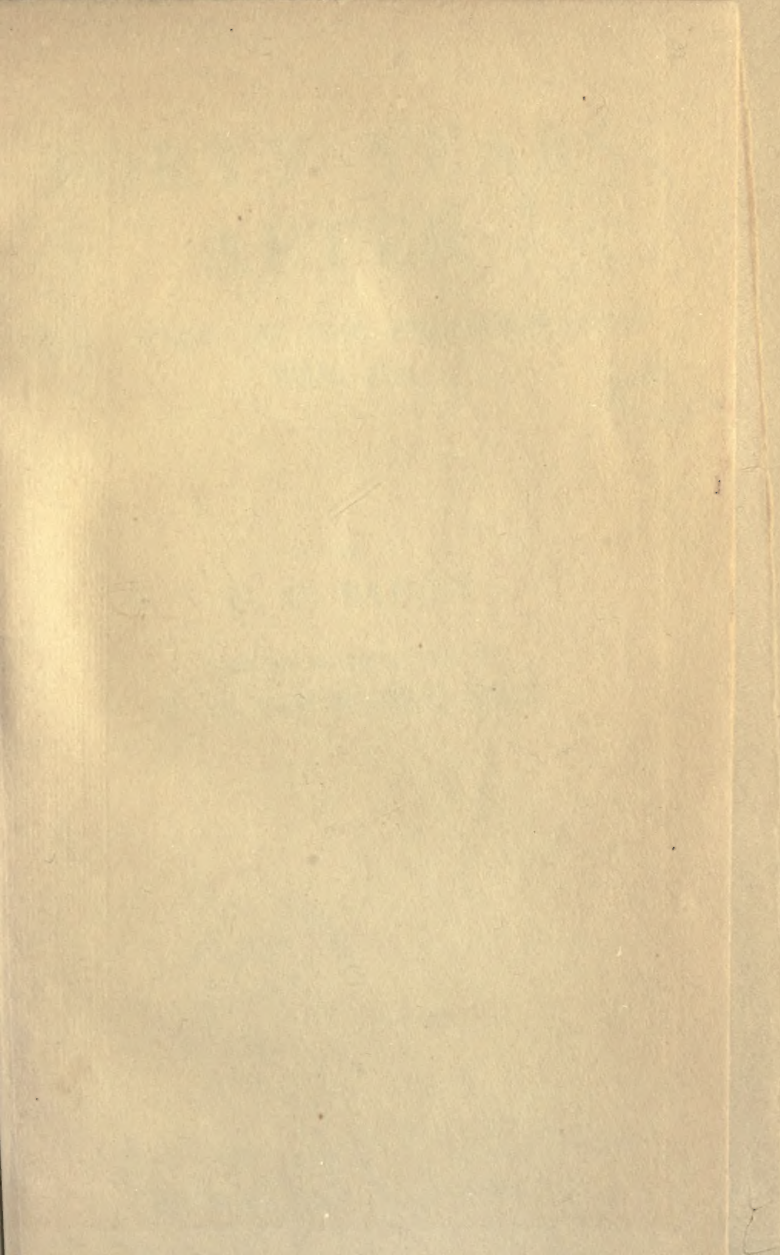
by the


ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980









Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

727
52110

FORTY YEARS AFTER

1904
JAN 15
1871

THE STORY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN
WAR, 1870

~~1870~~
France

BY

H. C. BAILEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

W. L. COURTNEY, LL.D.

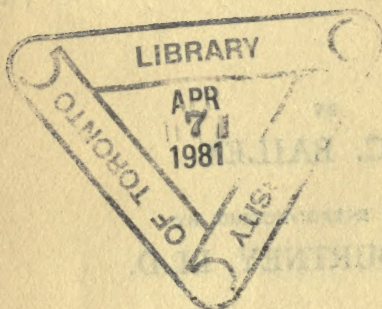


HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXIV

DC
290
B25



HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

I

IN the midst of a Franco-German conflict, in which the whole military resources of Berlin, combined with those of Vienna, are pitted against the members of the Triple Entente, it is natural that many readers should turn back to the records of the similar conflict which was waged in 1870. Only middle-aged men are able to recall the incidents in the earlier campaign. To the majority of us it remains as the mere memory of some great and devastating tornado, which laid waste the fields of France, and tore away from her the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

It is curious, however, to note, despite certain points of resemblance, how different the two campaigns are, both in general and in special features. In 1870 France and Germany were the sole combatants. It is true that Napoleon III. expected the assistance, both of Austria and of Italy. But that was one of the fatal mis-calculations of his policy, which in other respects

also betrayed an absence of prevision and thought. While the Prussians were fighting Austria in 1866 Napoleon had a great opportunity of intervening on the side of the country which was ultimately defeated. That he did not take this opportunity proves that he had not clearly foreseen the ultimate and inevitable conflict between himself and the War Lords of Berlin. Subsequently he made some tentative efforts to retrieve this mistake, and he seems to have thought that he had secured for himself a definite chance of assistance from lands imperilled by the growing might of Prussia. Undoubtedly, he thought that he had been betrayed in this matter, but the details of the negotiations are very obscure and the main fact is that, at the outbreak of hostilities in the beginning of August 1870, France stood alone and the sympathies of Europe at large were doubtful. It must be remembered that France during the Third Empire was constantly menacing the peace of Europe, just as she had done during the First Empire, and among the smaller nationalities at all events there was little or no affection towards Napoleon himself.

In the present war of 1914 the rôles are

reversed. France is not the aggressor, but Germany, and the Emperor William stands as the despot whom Europe fears, Hence in the present gigantic campaign we have Germany, with its ally Austria, confronted by France on the west, Russia on the east, with Great Britain co-operating in aid of the Triple Entente both by land and sea ; while Italy hesitates whether or no to join the forces in which she is most interested and help the French fleet to clear the Adriatic of her Austrian rival. Thus the sympathies of the world are clearly on the side of the Triple Entente, for it is generally recognized that a Europe dominated by the Kaiser would be almost uninhabitable. The chief feature, in fact, of the present situation is the uprising of free peoples against a dominion of brute force and arrogant materialism.

RAPIDITY AND DILATORINESS

The war has already lasted a little more than six weeks, and at once a fresh point of difference between it and the war of 1870 is apparent. Nothing was more striking than the rapidity with which events moved in the earlier campaign. A forward movement took place about the 28th July in 1870. On August 1st occurred the

somewhat theatrical affair at Saarbrücken, when the young Prince Imperial received his "baptism of fire." As a matter of fact Napoleon III. was forced to make some sort of move owing to the slow concentration of the French troops, and his desire to attract the sympathy, and probably the help, of the Austrians and Italians. Then followed a series of engagements. On August 4th a German victory at Weissenburg was closely followed on the 6th by similar triumphs at Spicheren and Wörth. After an interval of a week there occurred, on August 13th, the struggle at Colombey-Borny. Three days afterwards the news arrived of a German victory at Vionville-Mars-la-Tour, and two days after that of a sanguinary engagement at Gravelotte-St. Privat. On August 19th the investment of Bazaine in Metz was begun. Less than a fortnight afterwards, on September 1st, came the crowning disaster at Sedan, when Napoleon III. surrendered to his German conqueror. Thus the most significant incidents were all crowded into a space of some five weeks. The forces engaged were not so large as those which have met in the shock of battle during the course of the present war, but the German superiority was everywhere visible, and the issue of

the campaign, after the first few days, was never really in doubt.

THE BARRIER OF LIÈGE

Compare this drama of five weeks with the opening of the war of 1914, and the contrast is vivid and striking. On August 2nd the Germans violated the neutrality of Luxemburg and probably made a raid over the frontier at Longwy or Cirey. On August 3rd and 4th Belgium was invaded in defiance of all the treaties. On the 5th and 6th commenced the struggle before Liège, in which the Belgians obstinately, and successfully, resisted the attacks of the invading army. On the 7th, so greatly had the Germans suffered in these engagements, an armistice was asked for and refused. On the same day, in another part of the theatre of war, in Alsace, the French had commenced offensive operations and captured Altkirch. On August 12th and 13th took place the fights at Haelen and Eghezee, followed on the 15th by a serious battle at Dinant, in which the French prevented an attempted crossing of the River Meuse and recaptured Dinant itself which had been taken by the enemy. The British Expeditionary Force was safely landed on the French coast and sent to join the

French and Belgian army somewhere in the neighbourhood of Brussels. An important combat near Brussels, extending over several miles, began on the 17th, and the Belgian capital was evacuated.

PROGRESS OF THE WAR

It is clear then that the military operations in the present war did not bring about, during the early weeks, the big battles that were expected. The reason is tolerably plain. Evidently the Germans thought that they could sweep with ease through Belgium. The fact that for some days they knocked their heads in vain against the forts of Liège opened their eyes to the magnitude of the task they had undertaken. Perhaps the War Staff in Berlin trusted too much to the effects of a sudden attack, without completing their commissariat arrangements ; and, indeed, without bringing up those monstrous siege guns which are the latest invention of Krupp's factory. They learnt their lesson later. The pick of the German army was poured through Belgium during the last half of August, and the whole panorama of war was changed. It would seem that General Joffre, for some reason or other, did not anticipate the main German attack so far towards

the north. Probably, for purely patriotic reasons he was anxious to show to France that they were on their way to recover, the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. At all events the Allies found themselves in Belgium in no position to resist the German advance. The battle of Charleroi began on August 21st, and ended the next day in a French defeat. Simultaneously, or rather a day later, the British army was engaged at Mons with greatly superior forces and had to retire. The fall of Namur was announced on August 24th. Louvain was destroyed by the Germans on August 25th, and the Allies from that date up to the beginning of September were forced to fall back, fighting rearguard actions all the way, until they took up a position on August 31st on the line—the Seine, the Oise and the Upper Meuse. It looked for the moment as if Paris was to undergo another siege, and the Government withdrew from the capital to Bordeaux. But September 5th saw a dramatic change. The German attack, under General von Kluck, was diverted from Paris in an easterly direction, probably owing to strong reinforcements which had joined the French army from the south, and the English army from Havre and Dieppe. The tide of

invasion began to turn, and the Allies gradually forced the Germans back from positions which were just east of Paris to St. Quentin and the north of Rheims. On September 16th, although here and there the German retreat had become disorderly, many guns and prisoners being captured by the Allies, it was announced that the Germans were making a stand, and a further great battle, succeeding the battle of the Marne on September 7th and onwards, seemed imminent. What was clear throughout, however, was that the English army was as vigorous for attack as it had been in defence, that the French artillery was on the whole superior to the German, and that the French soldier was a finer and more stalwart combatant than he had proved himself forty years before.

II

FRENCH TROOPS IN 1870

The supposed inferiority, however, of the French troops as compared with the Germans in the war of 1870, is hardly borne out by the facts. The real difference between the two armies lay in leadership and organization. The German staff had long before the outbreak of the war prepared a scheme of operations in which two main objects

were kept in view—the defeat of the French armies in the field and the occupation of Paris. Year by year these plans were overhauled and brought up to date in accordance with any fresh circumstances that might arise, such as the co-operation of minor German armies and the like. So far as we know, no similar French plan was in existence, though it is quite possible that an outline scheme had been prepared in view of Austrian and Italian assistance. We must remember that in June, 1870, General Le Brun had been sent by Napoleon as a confidential agent to Vienna and that rightly or wrongly the French Emperor had made up his mind that if he concentrated his troops in northern Bavaria he would be joined by Austrians and Italians and that the united army would then march by Jena to Berlin. How or why the scheme broke down we cannot say. Perhaps it was betrayed to Moltke and the Prussians.

OPENING SCENES

At any rate, when war was declared, the French troops, despite the celebrated remark that they were ready to the last button of their gaiters, were as a matter of fact without transport and supplies. If only the five army corps had been in readiness

and had been led by generals of vigour and resource, they could have fallen on the Germans' 2nd Army which had been pushed forward by Moltke almost before it was ready and was struggling in the defiles of the Hardt, with a crushing superiority. The French intelligence service was notoriously inefficient at this juncture, for it failed to report the further fact that the 3rd German Army, owing to want of preparation, was entirely unable to move so as to keep the enemy's attention from Armies 1 and 2. It is piteous to read how the French soldiers were marched and counter-marched along the frontiers during the early days of the war, apparently with no other object than to find some defensive position wherein to use their new weapons, the Chassepôts and the mitrailleuse. And as we know, the demonstration at Saarbrücken on August 1st was more of the nature of a theatrical display than a real military movement.

WEAPONS OF WAR

It is curious to observe that as in the present war the French had the better weapons, for the Prussian needle-gun was as manifestly inferior to the Chassepôt as it had proved itself superior to the Austrian

arm in the campaign of 1866. Perhaps the mitrailleuse did not do all that was expected of it and of course the French artillery was not half as good as the Creusot guns of to-day. The remark, however, may be hazarded that throughout the war of 1870 the French were more often than was necessary asked to fight in defensive positions and behind fortifications—a mode of fighting which does not suit the “*furia Francese*” as much as resolute charges in the open. They were on the defensive at Weissenburg, at Spicheren, above all at Gravelotte—possibly because of the supposed superiority of their weapons. In the present war they have been allowed to charge in the open field and the Germans have already had cause to fear their bayonets. In many of the engagements of 1870 the French came within an ace of victory. That was the case notably at the battle of Spicheren, where Frossard—one of the few generals who acted up to his reputation—had practically won, and would have gained a brilliant success if he had only had the support he naturally expected from the generals near him. The same thing can be said of the engagement at Colombey-Borny, which was clearly a drawn battle: while, with a little more luck, the disasters at

Weissenburg and Wörth might have been changed into successes.

INCOMPETENT GENERALS

No, it was not the French soldier who was wanting either in courage or pertinacity. It was the incompetence of his generals which ruined his cause. We have already seen how feebly the directing chiefs grasped the essential conditions at the very beginning of the campaign and how uselessly the troops were marched forward and backward along the frontier. After Saarbrücken, where success was gained thanks to an overwhelming force, the victors did not even break down the bridges in order to retard the advancing foe. The French had no tactician in any sense equal to Prince Ferdinand Charles, nor yet any cavalry leader — except possibly Galliffet — equal to von Alvensleben. Marshal MacMahon allowed himself, over and over again, to be controlled by political rather than by purely military considerations. Bazaine was full of indecision—even if the charge of treachery against him ought to be withdrawn—and never seemed to be able to make up his mind when he ought to fight or when it was wise to retreat. And as for Napoleon himself, he was in the grasp of cruel anxiety

about his capital and his own imperial power; and quite apart from the illness which incapacitated him, was constantly changing his purposes and interfering with the strategy of his generals, according to the pressure of events behind him. The mad scheme of MacMahon's march to relieve Metz and the consequent *débâcle* of Sedan were the direct results of subordinating military interests to the necessities of the Napoleonic régime.

III

CHANGES IN GERMAN CHARACTER

Only at certain intervals and under the pressure of great events do we discover the extent of radical change in national characteristics. The change may be amelioration, reform, such as many observers have found in the French nation since Sedan or among the Swedes since they made their resolute effort to suppress drunkenness. Or else it may be a downward process, like that which has converted the Germans before 1870 to the Germans we see to-day. The fact of the change can hardly be doubted. What sort of barbarians are the men who ravage and slay peaceful inhabitants in Belgium, destroy their churches, kill the wounded, and carry on a war even against defenceless

women and children? We should like to disbelieve the stories which come from the neighbourhood of Brussels and Liège; but they rest on the authority of responsible officials, such as the Commission appointed by the Belgian Government, and are testified to by eye-witnesses like newspaper correspondents of position and honesty. Who are the men who describe a solemn treaty between nations as "a scrap of paper" to be torn asunder at the first favourable opportunity, and declare their resolution "to hack their way through" all the constraining bonds of legality and justice? None other than the German Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg himself. What else has General von Bernhardt written on the Next War except advice to his countrymen how best to smash the enemy by all means, whether fair or foul? No wonder that they call German troops *les barbares* in Belgium for they have discovered only too well the brutality of their handiwork. Let the old men and priests and doctors and women and children bear witness to the base record of the German soldiers. When a nation can insult foreign Ambassadors, as was done in the case of M. Cambon and others, when it can bully and injure harmless tourists only seeking to find at the

outbreak of the war some means of returning to their own country, when it can break treaties and violate neutral territory and offer "infamous proposals" to self-respecting and honourable governments, it may call itself civilized, but it possesses a form of civilization more appropriate to the denizens of a Zoological Society than to the decent and well-ordered communities of Europe.

FROM IDEALISM TO REALISM

Brutality—that is the just epithet to apply to the German character as revealed to us in all its enormity during recent days. Or rather, for we have no desire to confound the innocent with the guilty, brutality seems to be the main characteristic of that military party which, headed by the Kaiser himself, rides rough-shod over all the graces and amenities of life in Berlin. How has it all come about, we ask in wonder—all this vain-glorious parade, this offensive swagger, this Potsdam megalomania—when we look back to the Germany of Goethe and Schiller and Lessing in the early years of the nineteenth century? Germany was the home of culture then, the home of scholarship and philosophy, the home also of a wistful idealism, sentimental, pathetic and pure. Was not Kant the author of that tremendous

ethical system which taught the inviolable sanctity of the Categorical Imperative? Did not Hegel construct a body of metaphysical thought embracing all the fields of Being and Not-Being? A change came with Schopenhauer, a change from Optimism to Pessimism, from the Will to live and do great things, to the Will which negates itself and seeks a Nirvâna of passivity. Then came von Hartmann, by no means so good a philosopher as his predecessor and exhibiting some of those instincts to solve problems not by logic but by sheer masterfulness which—in another field—we describe as the jack-boot of a dragoon. And then was evolved that marvellous portent, Nietzsche, the prophet of the Over-man and of the “blond brute” who rules by might and not right, and terrorises the world by sheer strength. The sensitive delicacy of a cultured literature was by this time hopelessly left behind and we have entered the domain of crass realism and brutality in the hands of men like Sudermann and Wedekind. The “Hannele” and “Sunken Bell” of Hauptmann form a singular exception which only serves to accentuate the prevailing tendency towards far different ideals.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

It is not good for a nation to become



NAPOLÉON III.

FORTY YEARS AFTER

CHAPTER I

À BERLIN !

" LOUIS has just received his baptism of fire. He was admirably cool and not at all affected." In the Paris papers of August 3rd, 1870, you may read that telegram from Napoleon III. to his Empress Eugénie. That " baptism of fire " for the ill-starred Prince Imperial was also the first cannonade of the Franco-German War. A very small cannonade, to be sure, but quite big enough for an emperor's bulletin. " We were in the first line, but the bullets and cannon shot fell at our feet," that proud father continues. " Louis intends to keep a bullet which fell close to him. Some of the soldiers wept at seeing him so calm."

You expect a touch of bombast in the bulletins of any Napoleon. Even for the Napoleonic style this seems a trifle forced.

The theatricality of it throws one ray of light on the causes which brought about the Franco-German War and the French *débâcle*. What were they fighting about in 1870? We have only vague ideas nowadays. You remember dimly some quarrel between France and Prussia about putting a prince of the house of Hohenzollern on the Spanish throne. You have read of the unscrupulous diplomacy by which Bismarck bamboozled the French ambassador and tricked France into putting herself in the wrong. But in a book which deals with war and not politics we need not much concern ourselves about that maze of manœuvring. Great wars, said the Greek, spring from small incidents, but not from small quarrels.

The official German theory is that the corrupt French Government was to blame. Or at least that was the theory before the noble doctrines that might is right and war the chief end of man were openly preached at Berlin. "A weak Government at the head of our neighbouring state," said Moltke, "must be regarded in the light of a standing menace to peace. A Napoleon on the throne of France was bound to establish his rights by political and military successes. Only for a time did the victories

won by French arms in distant countries give general satisfaction ; the triumphs of the Prussian armies excited jealousy, they were regarded as arrogant, as a challenge ; and the French demanded revenge for Sadowa. The liberal spirit of the epoch was opposed to the autocratic Government of the Emperor ; he was forced to make concessions, his civil authority was weakened, and one fine day the nation was informed by its representatives that it desired war with Germany." In fine, Napoléon le Petit rushed France into war to save himself from revolution and preserve the throne for his dynasty.

That Moltke's explanation contains something of the truth we shall not even now deny. It was certainly the settled policy of Napoleon III. to commend his empire to the French people by continual doses of military glory. His Government was weak, and it was corrupt, though we stern English moralists are apt to exaggerate the corruption. We have been taught to believe that no good thing could come out of the France of the Second Empire, that the great humiliation of 1871 was the just and inevitable punishment of iniquity. "The evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones."

So certainly it has been with Napoleon III. We remember the treachery and bloodshed of the *coup d'état* by which he came to the throne. We read book after book about the iniquity of Paris under his Empire. We forget his part in the deliverance of Italy. His Paris, his Government were doubtless corrupt. He had an unhappy knack of surrounding himself with riff-raff. If the art of being a great ruler is in the power to choose ministers, there never was a worse monarch than Napoleon III. But if we are to go further and say that Sedan and the surrender of Paris were divine vengeance on national wickedness, we seem to be usurping the functions of divinity. Was the Paris of 1870 so much worse than the Paris of 1854, which triumphed over Russia? If the French were an effete race by 1870, they had surely grown old very quickly since 1859, when at Solferino they shattered the power of Austria and made Italy free.

The Government was bad. The national spirit was enfeebled. But the theory of Moltke that a wicked Government and a neurotic nation made war on Germany is at most only half the truth. There was another cause more potent. We may call

it, if we choose, the national aspirations of Germany. It seems more true to fact to speak of the policy of the three men who controlled King William of Prussia—Roon, Moltke and Bismarck. To make Prussia and the King of Prussia powerful and still more powerful was to them a duty and a passion. There seems no reason to believe that they considered any other motive to action of much importance. Prussia above all, Prussia dominant in the universe, was for them an object to attain which everything might and ought to be sacrificed.

They had at their command a force which might have been turned to the noblest ends. The spirit of nationality which ever since the French Revolution had been potent in Europe, which has given us some of the noblest names and some of the most inspiring deeds of modern history, was vivifying Germany. From the Rhine to the Vistula, through all the congeries of petty states into which the Teutonic race was divided, the desire for unity had become quick and eager. (We have no reason to believe that for the spirit of nationality Bismarck or Roon cared a straw.) Faith in that would be a contradiction of the principles of absolutism

which in and sometimes out of season they professed and for which they were always ready to risk everything. But the only way to make Prussia dominant was to make her the leader of a united Germany. So Prussia, which from its origin, by its very existence, defied the rights of nationality, stood out the champion of German national spirit.

It was in an evil hour for the rights of nationalities and the world. How evil we are only now beginning to understand. But the dangers of the unholy alliance could be seen by those who had eyes to see even in 1870. Garibaldi was not deceived, for Bismarck, even while he used the national impulse, degraded it, because he did not believe in its nobility or understand its power. Material force, material strength were to him the only laws of the world. So he said, in one of his outbursts of cynical candour, that for the union of Germany "a grave struggle was necessary, a struggle that could only be carried through by blood and iron." All Germany must be dragged into war or Germany would never be united. Never, that is, on Prussian principles, never under a Prussian supremacy. So war followed war, first with

Denmark, then with Austria, at last with France.

We may allow that the Government of Napoleon III. conducted its foreign policy with a mixture of levity and stupidity which played into Bismarck's hands. But when Napoleon III. quoted, in his own justification, Montesquieu's dictum that "the real author of war is not he by whom it is declared, but he who renders it necessary," he made an appeal which the court of history will not dismiss. His antagonist, King William of Prussia, declared in answer that "the North German Confederation has laboured to improve the national forces not to imperil, but to afford a greater protection to universal peace." Yet Moltke has confided to us that year by year the plans of the Prussian General Staff for a war with France had been reviewed. "The orders for marching and travelling by rail or boat were worked out for each division of the army, together with the most minute directions as to their different starting-points, the day and hour of departure, the duration of the journey, the refreshment stations and place of destination." In fine, "when war was declared, it needed only the Royal signature to set the entire apparatus in motion with

undisturbed precision." So the faith in "universal peace" and hope and desire for it worked together in Prussia for good.

Till the very eve of the war there had been signs in Germany of a stubborn distrust of Prussia. Würtemberg was not alone among the southern states in possessing a strong party whose motto was "rather French than Prussian." The unscrupulous ingenuity of Bismarck and the sheer folly of the French Foreign Office stamped out all such sentiments. France was made to appear the aggressor. France was made to declare war. The fight appeared to be for the deliverance of Germany from the intolerable pretensions of restless French militarism. In such a cause all Germany rose as one man. The Prussian Government had long been sure that the rulers of the southern states could be relied upon. It was not only Governments, but the whole great nation between Vistula and Rhine which the strategy of Moltke marshalled for the assault.

In numbers the superiority of Germany was marked. Her forces were marshalled in three armies. The first, under Steinmetz, concentrating behind Trèves in the neighbourhood of Wittlich, numbered some 85,000

men. This formed the right wing. The second army with Prince Frederick Charles in command was about 210,000 strong. It was mustered around Homburg. The left wing, the third army, under the Crown Prince of Prussia, was formed on the eastern bank of the Rhine, near Rastatt, and its numbers were some 180,000. The grand total of the three armies is therefore 475,000. It will be observed that the points of concentration are for the two first armies a considerable distance in the rear of the German frontier. Inadequacy of railway communication was one reason for this caution. Moltke also appears to have felt a superfluous apprehension of French enterprise. During the night of July 16th, orders for mobilization were given. A fortnight later 300,000 German troops were on the Rhine. Moltke, who was not much given to boasting of his own achievements, has left it on record that this fortnight of mobilization gave him the most tranquil days of his life.

What of the French? Everyone remembers how Marshal Lebœuf, Napoleon's Minister of War, assured him that the army was ready "to the last gaiter button." Modern military critics of eminence have held that one of the cardinal faults of

French generalship in the war was a tendency to wait till everything was ready and more than ready. After the declaration of war, we are told, the French armies should have struck without waiting for a perfect provision of cooking pots. Moltke, however, seems to have thought that the French error lay rather in sending their troops to the frontier before all preparations were complete than in failing to take the offensive. "The condition of the men," he says dogmatically, "prohibited any action." There was, according to French authorities, a deficiency in money, in food, in camp-kettles, cooking utensils, tents, harness, medicine and stretchers. So much for Marshal Lebœuf and his "last gaiter button."

In mere weight of numbers the French were far inferior to the Germans. They could only muster something less than 300,000 men. Of these about 128,000 were posted under Bazaine, Faily and other commanders between Metz and Saarbrück. MacMahon, with 47,000, was in the eastern Vosges. At Châlons, Canrobert commanded a corps of 35,000. Nominally, the Emperor was himself commander-in-chief. Whether he ever had any other claim to military capacity than his bearing

the name of Napoleon, we need not discuss. In 1870 he was physically and mentally a broken man. Tortured by disease, he had neither the ability to form plans nor the strength of will to put them into execution. This paralysis in the supreme command was not compensated by any high ability in the subordinate positions. The Chief of Staff was to be Marshal Lebœuf, the War Minister who "had come in by a back stair behind a petticoat." Of the generals of the different armies, the best was probably MacMahon, who could at least be called a fair tactician. There were good divisional officers, none who showed any aptitude for independent command. It has been held that the general officers of the Second Empire had been spoilt by training in colonial campaigns, which made them unable to grasp the conditions of European warfare. We shall be on surer ground if we suggest that the unstable Government of the Second Empire, which inquired rather whether an officer was a good Bonapartist than whether he was fit for command, is to blame for the pervading inefficiency. The man whom Napoleon trusted most and to whom he soon surrendered the chief command was Bazaine. Bazaine had come up from the ranks by

honest merit. He possessed the quality of taking pains. He had always done what had been thrust upon him, without gross failure. Unfortunately he lacked enterprise and the resolute will without which all other military qualities are useless to a commander.

Thus the numerical weakness of the French was doomed to be exaggerated by their generalship. There is some truth in the familiar sneer that France was defeated not by Moltke, but by her own commanders. On the German side there was above all unity of purpose. Moltke reigned supreme. In discreet language he tells us that the King of Prussia was content to do what he was told. Throughout the campaign there was not one council of war. Day by day Moltke laid his plans before the King, and after a brief discussion *pro forma* his Majesty was invariably pleased to approve. What place is to be given Moltke among great generals it is difficult to decide. He always achieved with entire success what he set out to do. The Franco-German War is beyond question one of the most completely successful campaigns in history. But it must be remembered that Moltke never had to deal with a general of high ability or a stubbornly contested war. He

had at least in a high degree the qualities which, according to his own estimate, are all that can be expected of the leader of an army, the capacity "to get a clear view of the circumstances and to decide for the best for an unknown period" and the will to "carry out his purpose unflinchingly." Of his subordinates few gave sign of any higher ability than that which belongs to the "first-class fighting man." They were at their best energetic and good tacticians. The worst of them could hammer away at the enemy till they had not a man left. Under Moltke's direction they were quite adequate to deal with the French commanders, though more than once during the campaign there were signs that a strong man on the other side would have made queer work with them.

In armament the French had something of the advantage. The Chassepôt rifle, which was the French weapon, had a range of 1,200 paces. The German needle-gun at anything more than 400 was "as useless as a stick." The Chassepôt, too, had a better breach and was by far more handy. To its efficiency was due the terrific losses which the Germans had to sustain in some of the critical battles of the war. In

artillery, on the other hand, the Germans had the better of it. Their shells burst on striking. The French missiles had a time-fuse, which in practice frequently caused an explosion long before it could be effective. Much had been expected by the French of their mitrailleuse, a primitive machine-gun. But "hope told a flattering tale." The German artillery destroyed the mitrailleuses by long-range firing. The German infantry by rapid movements captured them at no great cost.

In the military quality of the common soldier the superiority was with the Germans. The French again and again proved themselves capable of one gallant effort in a battle, but too often that one was their last. The Germans would come on after repulse as stubbornly as at first. We must, however, remember that the indecision of the French commanders and their fondness for seeking strong positions and fighting purely defensive actions was not likely to inspire their troops. In marching power, which, as always, was to be one of the decisive factors of the war, the Germans were far superior. What the first Napoleon and his men would have thought of a French corps which could

only cover some five miles a day we can hardly imagine. Yet five miles a day was all that MacMahon's men did in the crisis of the campaign.

When war broke out nobody dreamed that the heart of the French was not in the war. The ebullitions of Paris deceived even experienced and impartial observers. Yet it seems probable that until French patriotism was roused by the disaster of Sedan and the presence of the invader on French soil, there was no general national impulse behind the armies of France. The suspicion that the war was merely a device of the adventurer who called himself Emperor to consolidate his waning power had corroded the energy of the nation. We must not forget that on the very eve of the war a large part of the French people was weary of the Second Empire. Not for the first time in the history of France, Parisian demonstrations were no true guide to the feelings of the provinces.

But there is much excuse for those critical observers in Paris who made sure that the war was to be a national crusade. On the eve of the German mobilization we are told that the Parisian papers were "positively snarling with rage at the

prospect of a peaceful issue to the Franco-Prussian difficulty." English people were informed that the acquisition of the Rhenish provinces of Germany would make Napoleon III. the most popular French monarch since St. Louis. It had occurred to no one in Paris that the end of the war would be not the acquisition, but the loss of provinces. Crowds surged through the Paris streets roaring, "À Berlin! À Berlin!" Restaurants posted up menus in this style: "Potage Solferino, Jambon de Mayence, Poulet à la Marengo, Vin du Rhin, Kirschenwasser de la Forêt Noire." The soldiers were entrained for the front with such demonstrations that critics as much Prussian in sympathy as French were moved to prophesy; "Men who go off singing like that seldom lose battles." Paris, in fine, went mad with bombast. You remember how the expedition to Sicily which was to ruin the Athenian empire set out amid just such another ecstasy of arrogance.

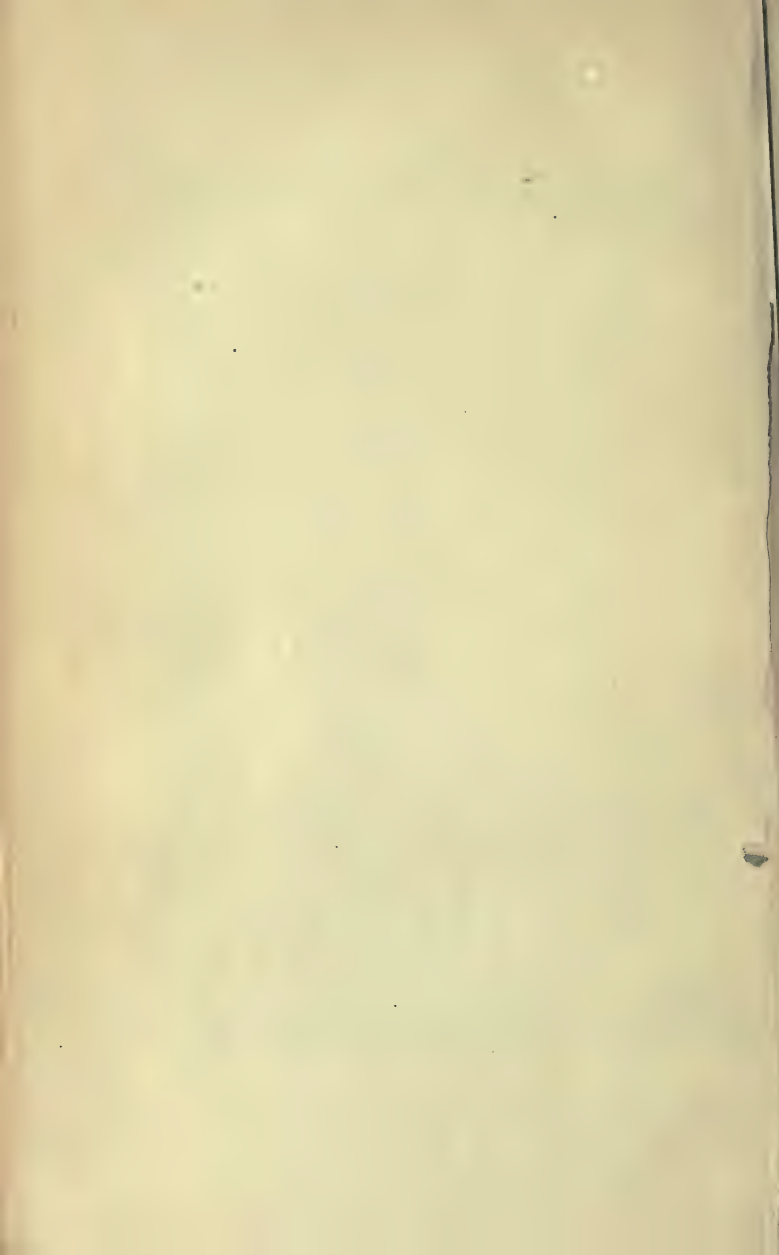
Away on the eastern frontier General Frossard, who had been the governor of the Prince Imperial, announced his intention of "making the *début* of the campaign." The very phrase illustrates the spirit in which the French commanders



Detail

THE SOLDIER'S DREAM.

[Luxemburg.]



approached their work. It was to be a spectacle, an affair of the theatre. Frossard on the heights of the Spicherenberg had some 60,000 men. Down at Saarbrücken Colonel von Pestel had 800 infantry and two squadrons of Uhlans. He had been ordered of course to retire ; but he was in no hurry. As he rode out on August 1st he shouted to some English war correspondents, " Hurrah, I go to draw de shoots of de enemy ! Come along ! " The position of the war correspondent in military esteem has changed. Pestel did " draw de shoots of de enemy " and shot back. It was on that 1st August, a fortnight after the German mobilization, that the first shots were exchanged and the Prince Imperial received his " baptism of fire." Pestel retreated calmly with a loss of eight men and the advancing French found his outposts held by stuffed dummies. Down into German territory came the advancing French. They took Saarbrücken, they " drank a brewery dry and kissed all the girls in the Rheinische Hof." It is recorded that a bold corporal even kissed the landlady. But that was the total of their achievements. From the heights above the town the Emperor watched their advance. The next time he saw

German scenery he was a prisoner being carried into safe custody. This trivial raid into Saarbrücken was the only advance of the French armies across the German frontier. The rest of the war was fought out in the fields of France.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST ROUND

THERE is something strangely impressive in the silent efficiency of the German mobilization. The mere numbers, altogether less than 500,000, would not alarm a generation which has learnt to think of armies in terms of millions. Even earlier wars had seen the employment of masses as great. But seldom before had railways been at the disposal of a commander. Never before it is certain had such an army been brought into the field within the space of a fortnight. Moltke himself seems to have felt a quaint awe for the machine which he had built. He speaks of it in terms usually reserved for the acts of the Almighty. The advance was "pre-ordained in every detail." "Pre-ordained"—you can watch the Chief of the Prussian General Staff looking into the mirror of his own imagination to see himself as the vicar of God on earth.

Just what Moltke's scheme for the

campaign was he has told us with his usual terse lucidity. "In his plan of war, submitted by the Chief of the General Staff and accepted by the King, that officer had his eye fixed from the first upon the capture of the enemy's capital, the possession of which is of more importance in France than in other countries. On the way thither the hostile forces were to be driven as persistently as possible back from the fertile southern states into the narrower tract on the north. But above all the plan of war was based on the resolve to attack the enemy at once wherever found, and keep the German forces so compact that a superior force could always be brought into the field."

"Nach Paris!" then, was the watchword of the campaign. Moltke's studies in history—and probably he was a better historian than any man of his profession in Europe—had not misled him. With a government so highly centralized as that of France the capture or even the peril of Paris must always be a terrible blow to the national vitality. He was right, we cannot doubt, to aim at Paris "from the first." If the siege did not paralyse France as completely as he had counted upon, that was because his principles and his

temperament prevented him from understanding that even in material things national spirit is a great force. There is a comical irritation in his solemn style when he has to tell of the refusal of the provinces to know when France was beaten.

If he had a plan, and a tolerably precise plan of campaign, he did not delude himself with the fiction that that also was "pre-ordained." He knew well enough that "it is a delusion to believe a plan of war may be laid for a prolonged period and carried out in every point. The first collision with the enemy changes the situation entirely according to the result. Some things decided upon will be impracticable ; others, which originally seemed impossible, become feasible." We shall see in the sequel how far he was capable of acting on these excellent principles, how nearly he approached the supreme practical ability of the great Greek who, whatever his blunders, was always "the most capable of men to meet the need of the hour."

In the French army we may fairly say there was no plan at all. It was not iron-bound adherence to out-of-date arrangements which was the danger of the French generals, but sheer inconsequence, lack

of co-ordination, and incoherence. It is supposed that there was some vague intention to deliver a number of unforeseen attacks. The fleet was to convoy an expeditionary force to the coast of Prussia. That army never started. The main French advance was to be made across the Rhine at and below Strassburg. That advance was never begun. Yet such was the touching confidence of the French Ministry of War in their plans for invasion that troops were left ill-supplied because they were to live upon the resources of Germany, and the officers had maps of Germany but none of their own provinces because there could be no fighting within the French frontier. And after all, the only invasion was the futile raid upon Saarbrücken which, if it was meant for a reconnaissance, discovered nothing, and if it was meant for the first steps in a general advance was never followed up.

After the capture of Saarbrücken, the French generals seem to have had no idea what to do next. They halted long between many contradictory opinions. On the rumours of one day troops were moved to be recalled by the rumours of the next. The Guards actually received simultaneous orders contradicting each other. The net

result of all this was much futile marching and counter marching which served to weaken the not excessive confidence of the men in their generals and leave the French troops widely scattered while the Germans were advancing in compact masses on the Saar.

The blow was to be struck through Lorraine. We must revise our modern notions of the French frontier in order to understand the situation. Alsace and Lorraine were still French. The Rhine between Lauterburg and Basle was the boundary between France and Germany. Strassburg was a French fortress. Therefore, an invading army, if it tried to enter France south of Lauterburg, would have to fight for a bridge over the Rhine, and after that for the passes of the Vosges. To attempt the other extremity of the French frontiers over against Belgium was an expedient which did not in 1870 enter into the Prussian imagination. They were certainly not Quixotes, Moltke and Bismarck, but they had some capacity for seeing things as they are. They knew that a violation of Belgian neutrality would have lit a fire in Europe in which Prussia might have been consumed. But Prussian statecraft has long since left Bismarck far behind.

There remained therefore as the one obvious path for the invader, Lorraine, the northern frontier of Lorraine between Lauterburg and Thionville. That line was essentially an artificial boundary. It was defended by no natural barrier whether of mountain or river. It had not been strengthened by art. The only fortresses of importance in the east of France were Strassburg and Belfort. It invited the German armies. The country on the French side of the border, though not such an ideal fighting ground as the Belgian "cockpit," allows of the operations of great armies. Lorraine is a pleasant land of field and vineyard and wooded hill, but neither its hills nor its valleys are of great size. So it was to clear the road into Lorraine that the first round of the war was fought.

Close to the old Franco-German frontier on the north bank of the Lauter, a stream which runs down to the Rhine, stands the little town of Weissenburg. On August 4th the army of the Crown Prince, some 130,000 strong, marched into France. Before the walls of Weissenburg the Bavarian troops, who were on the right wing, found themselves in a hot fight. They were, in fact, only opposed by one

weak division and a cavalry brigade under General Douay. The troops which should have supported him were not upon the scene. Nevertheless, Douay made a gallant resistance, and it was not until Prussian troops came to the aid of the Bavarians and he was beset by overwhelming numbers and in danger of being outflanked that he gave orders to retire. After heavy loss the Germans captured the town of Weissenburg. Their advance was delayed by the Geisberg, a hill of some size crowned by a fortress which in those days ranked as formidable. It drove back infantry again and again, and only after artillery had been hauled up the hill would the little garrison surrender.

The French escaped destruction, though they lost their gallant commander Douay. To him and his troops the battle of Weissenburg was altogether honourable. Vastly outnumbered, they made the Germans pay 1,500 men for a victory which was of no great importance. For after the battle the Germans lost touch with them altogether, and were left wondering from which direction a French attack was to be expected. The German cavalry, owing to bad staff work, never reached the field till all was over.

Meanwhile MacMahon was doing his best to collect all the troops under his command, hoping to check the German advance by a counter-attack. But he could only muster 45,000 against the 130,000 Germans, and he took his stand in a strong position behind the little river Sauer close to Wörth. The town he left unoccupied and he broke down the bridge. The scene of the battle of Wörth is a landscape of broad meadows within range of commanding hills. On either side the stream vineyards and hop gardens offered cover. The hills were held by MacMahon and the Chassepôt rifles of his troops swept the meadows in the valley. Neither MacMahon nor the Crown Prince meant to fight on August 6th. Both wanted more time to concentrate their forces. But affairs of outposts drifted swiftly into a general engagement. Even after his divisional commanders had committed themselves, after 100 German guns had opened fire, the Crown Prince sent orders that nothing was to be done which would bring on a battle that day. The only result was to cause some confusion. General von Kirchbach determined to continue the frontal attack on his own responsibility. The Bavarians on MacMahon's flank

obeyed orders and retired. There followed a succession of attacks on either side which were invariably repulsed. The Germans suffered heavily, but the issue could only be a question of time. Their overwhelming numbers bore more and more heavily upon the French as the fight went on. Twice the French cavalry made gallant attempts to shatter the masses enveloping them. The nature of the ground was against them. Through the vineyards and the hops they could hardly charge home, and the fire of the German infantry was deadly. It was growing towards five o'clock before the French army broke, but then retreat soon became a rout. The Prussians were like soldiers, the French like a mob, said one hasty critic, forgetting that those same French, outnumbered three to one, had sustained the fight all day. Nevertheless, it is true that MacMahon's army was utterly broken, and it never rallied till it reached Châlons many a mile away. Once again the defeated French had cause to be grateful to the cavalry of the Crown Prince. Once again that unfortunate cavalry did not come upon the scene till some time after everything was over. "As the general in command," says Moltke drily, "had

not foreseen a battle on August 6th the 4th Division of cavalry had not left its quarters in the rear and was therefore unable to follow in pursuit." But for that lack of foresight MacMahon would probably have been captured. Nevertheless, the victory was crushing. The French troops were demoralized; 7,000 of them were left prisoners. But the Germans paid dearly enough for the victory. More than 10,000 fell among the meadows and the vineyards of Wörth. More important than the material were the moral results of the battle. "Wonderful luck, this new great victory won by Fritz," the King of Prussia telegraphed to his queen, and the exultation of Germany was balanced by dismay at Paris. A week before "À Berlin" was the cry of the boulevards. After Wörth Paris began to talk of its own defence. A week before the Emperor was going to be a new St. Louis. After Wörth his throne was tottering. So ended the first round.

CHAPTER III

THE RETREAT ON METZ

By its victory at Wörth the 3rd Army had won for Germany the command of lower Alsace. The Crown Prince pressed on his advance through the hills. The chain of the Vosges in this northern district is an insignificant obstacle compared with the Grandes Vosges to the south. Nevertheless, a determined defence might have made the advance expensive, and so the Germans moved with great caution. They did not know that MacMahon's men, having "fought like lions, had run like hares." They could not guess what we now see clearly enough that the course of events at Wörth offered prophetic information of the character of the war. MacMahon had called to his assistance generals who either disobeyed or obeyed at a sluggish speed. This lack of hearty co-operation was to be the mark of French generalship throughout the campaign. The French troops, though they had been gallant in action, became

demoralized when the day was lost. That too was again and again to be the issue of battles.

We may now leave the Crown Prince struggling with a superfluous caution through the hills while the *sauve qui peut* of MacMahon's men brings them as a disheartened, discredited rabble into Châlons. Simultaneously with the fight at Wörth another battle was being decided to the north-west on the other flank of the German advance. When the Germans began to move, the arrangements had ceased to work with the smoothness of "pre-ordination." The general of the 1st Army, Steinmetz, fell to quarreling with the general of the 2nd Army, Prince Frederick Charles, and as a consequence had a skirmish with Moltke himself, which does not seem to have increased either party's respect for the other. Steinmetz, moving southward on a more extended front than Moltke designed, used some of the eastern roads which had been reserved for the troops of Prince Frederick Charles. The Red Prince curtly ordered him off. Steinmetz chose to telegraph an appeal direct to the King over Moltke's head. His reward was a reply from Moltke in terms which displeased him. The practical

consequences were a tangle, which in face of the feeble French opposition was of no particular importance, and in the more remote future a pronounced disinclination on the part of Steinmetz to agree with headquarters or any one else. He was a difficult man to manage. So was Prince Frederick Charles, and we may sympathize with Moltke's difficulties in driving such a team.

The line of march of the 1st and 2nd German armies, then, crossed at Saarbrücken, scene of the baptism of fire, and the French doubtless believed that the masses which reached that town on August 6th were brought by design instead of a muddle. At all events, General Frossard, hero of "the début of the campaign," considered his position dangerous, and abandoned the place without waiting for permission to retreat. It is fair to say that the French Emperor left him to himself not only in the matter of orders, but also as to reinforcements. Three divisions were, indeed, sent to support him. Only two reached him, and those not till the battle was lost and won.

Frossard took up his position on the heights of the Spicherenberg, from which Napoleon III. and the Prince Imperial had

watched the first cannonade of the war. The centre was protected by a lofty, almost precipitous cliff, called the Rotheberg, the Red Mountain. The slopes on either side were steep and densely wooded. On the left a cluster of houses, the iron-works of Stiering-Wendel, offered further advantages to the defence. As at Wörth, a battle was never intended by the German higher command. It has been held that the whole affair was from the German point of view a mistake. But Moltke, though he admitted that the fight formed no part of his plans, maintained that as the result was a victory it suited him well enough.

The battle was brought on by the impetuosity of the German divisional commanders who thought that the French fire came from nothing stronger than a rear guard and pressed on to overwhelm it. As the first firing was heard, other German troops marched upon the sound and engaged without orders. So in the early stages of the affair the French were in superior strength and delivered violent counter attacks. The Germans plunging pell mell into the fight were involved in a confusion "which increased with every repulse and made the control of the battle a matter of the greatest difficulty."

That "control" unfortunately for the Germans passed from hand to hand. During the morning three generals one after another hustled on to the battlefield and one after another took over the command. But as the day wore on, increasing numbers and hard fighting began to smooth out the muddle. A battalion of fusiliers under cover of the fire of the Prussian artillery contrived to establish themselves at the foot of the scarp of the Rotheberg. They tried to storm it but could only hold a narrow spur of the hill. Reinforcements came at length and the French were swept out of their trenches. While the Germans thus made good their attack in the centre, their right wing had fought its way to Alt-Stiering, near the French line of retreat. Frossard saw the danger, strengthened his left and beat off the German threat. It was already after 5 o'clock and the French position was not shaken. Owing to the hurry scurry in which the battle had begun and the lack of any connection between the fighting and the German higher command, reinforcements which might have come up never knew that anything of importance was happening and placidly went into camp in the neighbourhood. Fresh cavalry did come upon the scene, until the Germans

had twenty-nine squadrons, but owing to the nature of the ground they were of little use. The Hussars who attempted to ride up the Rotheberg deserve all the honours of courage, but it was not, however magnificent, a valuable enterprise. At last strenuous efforts brought some German guns to the summit, but the French tirailleurs promptly shot down the gunners. The decisive stroke fell elsewhere. General von Goeben—he was to prove himself among the best of the German commanders—saw that the fortune of the day could be turned by the old attack on the French left at Stiering. He led thither every battalion he could muster. The French wing was beaten and crippled. By nightfall the whole army was in full retreat. It was not pursued. The Germans had lost even more heavily than the French, 4,800 men to 4,078. It was not for either side a very glorious battle, though the Germans as they drove back the superior numbers of the enemy could claim some substantial success. The hurried retirement of Frossard on Metz left eastern Lorraine in German hands. There remained confronting the massed German advance the fortifications of Metz and the troops of Marshal Bazaine.

At Metz was the Emperor. When first

the news of the two defeats of August 6th reached him, he thought, or his military advisers thought for him, of retreating on Châlons. One corps of Bazaine's army was indeed already marching westward before that plan was given up. Not military but political reasons were the cause of the change. If he abandoned his eastern provinces in the first few days of the war Napoléon le Petit could not count upon the safety of his throne. Already there were ominous rumblings and mutterings in Paris, and when the news of Wörth and Spicheren reached the capital the ministry was overthrown by a vote which declared it incapable of organizing the defence of the country. From that to the dismissal of the Emperor himself on the same charge was the shortest of steps. For the moment the Republicans though hourly growing in strength could not press their policy further. They had to see a new ministry formed under the old régime. But the Emperor in Metz was left uncertain what revolution a day or an hour might bring forth.

What could he do but try his fortune at Metz? In fact there was sufficient military justification for him to hold his ground. He could still command 200,000 troops with a fortress to support them which in all

the history of war had never been taken. The Germans must outnumber him, but not so vastly that he could not hope for a happy issue out of his afflictions. He stood fast therefore in Metz.

The Germans advancing were puzzled by the absence of opposition. Both MacMahon's army and Frossard's had vanished into the unknown. The Crown Prince, as we know, expected to find MacMahon somewhere near the Vosges and took his time. When he emerged from the hills, having seen no French troops but a few scattered parties on the sky line, Moltke determined that the time had come to bring the three sections of the German forces into closer connection and upon the same front. But the Crown Prince's army was so leisurely that the 1st and 2nd Armies had to wait for it. A general advance began on August 12th.

The valley of the Saar, from which the movements started, is not a haunt of travellers. It now abounds in collieries, blast furnaces and odorous chemical factories. At Saarlouis, some 15 miles inside the old frontier, the 1st Army began its march moving by Les Etangs directly upon Metz. The 2nd Army starting from St. Avold, a small town about 30 miles east of Metz, was

to proceed by Nomény, which is almost due south of Metz on the Seille. The 3rd Army starting from the valley of the Saar at Saarunion was to march east to Dieuze and thence turn southward also. The cavalry reported the French as in full retreat all along the line. It was inferred that "a large army was encamped beyond Metz." Whether he was to expect a further retreat or a sudden attack with the whole weight of the French on his right wing Moltke could not be sure. For the first time, as he says, he "deemed it necessary to regulate the movements of each separate corps by direct orders." So the headquarters of King William were brought to the front between the 1st and 2nd Armies.

The French remained inactive. Moltke, though even after the event he did not profess to understand the mental processes of Bazaine, had begun to guess what in any given circumstances might be expected of the man—videlicet, nothing decisive. It seemed to Moltke rather more than possible that Bazaine would if he could avoid a fight. Still arrangements were made to meet the chance of the French army showing some generalship, the chance of an assault in force upon one of the German flanks.

What actually happened was neither of

these two things. Bazaine did put up a fight, but it was nolens volens. He would, if he could, have retreated. When he was forced to fight he fought with a bewildering caution. There is even now, with all the tale of his queer blunders before us in detail, no reason to doubt either his courage or his general fidelity to France. He was a sturdy soldier, and if he had never been more than brigadier would have left an honourable name. Under fire he knew no fear. Of moral courage he had little. He was quite incapable of the resolution to stake all his army on one desperate attack. He was forced to fight and he fought. But he would never dare more than he must.

CHAPTER IV

THE THREE ACTS OF METZ

THE operations round Metz fall naturally into three acts. The first was the battle of August 14th, best known in England as the Battle of Borny from the village in which Bazaine had his headquarters. August 16th saw the second, the Battle of Vionville—Mars-la-Tour. The third and last, the Battle of Gravelotte—St. Privat, which decided the fate of the French Army and the fortress of Metz, was fought on August 18th. All these battlefields lie within a few miles of the town. Borny was fought on the east, Mars-la-Tour to the south-west, Gravelotte on a widely-extended front to the west and north-west of the town. The general character of the country is easily understood. Metz stands at the confluence of the Moselle and Seille, at the bottom as it were of a saucer, the rising sides of which are wooded hills. The woods are denser and the hills are steeper to the west of the town.

The corps of the 1st Army commanded

by General von der Goltz had almost reached Metz on the night of August 13th. At four o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th he discovered that the French were in retreat. Bazaine and the Emperor had come at last to a half-hearted decision that strategy was more important than politics, and that the right strategy was to retreat upon Verdun. That, at least, is supposed to have been the intention, but exactly what Bazaine had in his mind at any given moment no one, perhaps not Bazaine himself, has ever been sure. The Emperor resigned to him the command-in-chief—an act of no great importance—and it is believed by many that even as early as this Bazaine had some vague plan of keeping his army intact at all costs that it might serve to defend the Emperor not against Germany, but against the growing strength of the Republican party. It is possible. Moltke, who on such a question is an impartial and beyond dispute a competent judge, thought this the most probable explanation of Bazaine's odd tactics. Perhaps history will incline to the opinion that Bazaine, though he certainly had a turn for the mysterious playing of his own hand, was essentially quite honest, and that what seems like political cunning

was mere weakness of resolution, constitutional inability to will anything vehemently. But the facts must speak for themselves.

When Von der Goltz heard of the retreat he flung his front columns across the French line of march and seized Colombey on the flank. This "cleared up the situation." The French at once attacked vigorously. Other troops of the German 1st Army hurried to the field, and the fight raged fiercely through the woods and on the slopes of the higher ground. One famous copse of firs was taken by storm, lost again and again captured. A division of the 2nd German Army came up and fell upon the left flank of the French. It was a confused battle, fought as a series of separate combats, and the German divisional generals, though they stood by each other loyally, did not bring into action all the available troops. Droll enough, the higher commands on each side were alike angry at the battle being fought at all. Both Steinmetz and Bazaine when they heard the firing sent peremptory orders that it should cease. Steinmetz, finding his orders disregarded, galloped to the field and stormed at Mauteuffel. In the midst of which edifying scene bands

struck up "Heil dir im Siegeskranz." Next morning Steinmetz reported Von der Goltz and Mauteuffel for disobedience to the King. The King publicly thanked them.

For Moltke had been "very well satisfied with the results obtained." The French had been driven back and retired under cover of heavy fire from the Metz forts. The retreat, that is, had been checked and time gained for the 2nd and 3rd German Armies to march round to the west of Metz. The end of the first act saw Bazaine already in danger of envelopment.

Early on the morning of the 16th the Emperor fled from the town, taking with him two brigades of cavalry as escort. He was only just in time. By nine o'clock German cavalry and artillery sent a regiment of French dragoons helter-skelter through a camp of their own infantry. So began the battle of Vionville—Mars-la-Tour. At first the French had the advantage. In the woods about Flavigny a German battalion "lost every one of its officers, the colours passing from hand to hand as their bearers were successively shot down." A German division, which had been sent forward to block if possible the road to Verdun by which the Emperor

had fled, as soon as its commander saw how the fight was going wheeled round upon Flavigny and Vionville. "The different divisions were now," naturally, "much mixed, but by taking advantage of every rise in the ground for cover the officers got their men steadily forward in spite of heavy fire from the French infantry and guns," and Flavigny, now in flames, was captured.

On a front of a mile the German forces faced east upon Metz. Bazaine had to "hack his way through" if he was to save his army or preserve his communications. It seems that the imperative duty for him was to fling every man he had into the fight. Why did he not? He must have known that only a part of the German armies could yet be in that battle line to the east of him. As a matter of fact, he had for the time the superiority in numbers. But he acted as if his one desire was to cling stolidly to Metz and to keep his forces together under his own independent command remote from whatever might be happening in France. He massed his troops so that his strength was concentrated on the left to secure his communications with Metz, on which no attack was to be feared and none was made.

Some gallant cavalry attacks were made on both sides. The French cuirassiers, trying to beat back the German advance to northward, charged through one desperate volley and rushed on into more infantry fire, to leave 250 horses on the field. A French battery which Bazaine himself had placed in position was surrounded by German hussars before it had discharged half a dozen shots, and in the *melée* Bazaine was all but captured.

Nevertheless, the German position grew dangerous. The long line was very thin and each moment weaker. General von Alvensleben had for some hours deceived the French as to his deficiency in numbers by continual attacks. But his battalions were much battered, tired by four hours' hard fighting and in want of ammunition. The Germans had not one battalion or one battery in reserve. Canrobert, who commanded the French centre, saw that the time had come to launch all his forces in an attack on Vionville. There were only two regiments of cavalry to check him, the Madgeburg Cuirassiers and the Altmärkische Lancers, and they mustered but 800 sabres. Their charge has been celebrated in Freiligrath's well-known "*Todesritt*," and it deserves that grim name.

General von Bredow led them. He was received with heavy fire from infantry and artillery. He broke through the first line and even the second, rode down two regiments of infantry and captured four batteries. But the charge was pressed too far. The French cavalry came down from all sides, and the broken brigade had to cut its way back through the French infantry, whose volleys tore them asunder. Of the 800 only half came back alive, but the French advance was checked.

At last Von Alvensleben's men, who had been fighting for seven hours, received efficient assistance. General von Voigts-Rhetz brought the 10th Corps into action on the German left, and a new and murderous battle began in the afternoon about Trouville and Mars-la-Tour.

Two Westphalian infantry regiments were advancing steadily through the fire of the French mitrailleuses when they found themselves unexpectedly on the edge of a deep combe. They struggled up the opposite bank to be received by point-blank volleys from superior forces of infantry. Almost every one of the officers was killed, and more than half the men fell on the slopes of that combe to the depths of which the shattered ranks fled

for refuge. When they rallied again at Trouville it was found that 72 officers out of 95 and 2,542 men out of 4,546 were missing. The colours were saved by Colonel von Cranach, "the only officer who still had a horse under him."

It was now nearly seven o'clock. In a last attempt to change the fortune of the day, six regiments of French cavalry were brought into action on the right. They met twenty-one German squadrons in "the greatest cavalry combat of the war." About 5,000 horsemen were engaged in this hand-to-hand encounter. It was fought in a series of regimental charges, and under the great cloud of dust which hid the combatants the advantage was now to one side, now to the other. At last the Germans had the better of it, and the French drew off.

The battle was won. The Germans occupied the positions which the French had held in the morning; 67,000 men had beaten off the attack of 138,000. The French had found no way of retreat, and were flung back upon Metz. The honours of the day went to Von Alvensleben and his corps, and the gallant fashion in which they held up the French masses all the morning through is pronounced by Moltke

“one of the most brilliant achievements of the war.”

By dusk, though the French had fallen back, all the German troops were worn out and short of ammunition. The horses had been saddled fifteen hours and without fodder. Most of the batteries could not move at more than a snail's pace. The nearest reinforcements were a day's march away. Yet Moltke ordered a fresh attack. It is hard to guess why. He can hardly have hoped that his exhausted army would gain any further success. It was at least possible that what had been already won might be lost. The actual issue was heavy loss to the German troops, who “hardly able to see what they were doing,” gained not an inch of ground.

Yet the fruits of the victory remained to Moltke. Bazaine's retreat had been again cut off and again he had been hurled back on Metz. So ended the second act.

Bazaine thought no more of breaking out. He chose to take up a position which was to be impregnable, if the fortune of the battle behaved reasonably. He had 180,000 men drawn up along a line of hills running north and south above the valley of the Mance. The westward front facing the French “sloped away like a glaci-

while the short and steep decline behind offered protection for the reserves." This glaxis-like front offered great advantages to the French with their long-range Chassepôts. They could and did inflict heavy losses on the Germans before the needle-guns were near enough to do any damage. The first effects of this were seen on the French right.

There were a good many tactical blunders at Gravelotte. The battle is more honourable to the German soldier than the German general. Moltke himself was not proud of it, and his subordinates had even less reason to congratulate themselves. If the French had been under the command of a general with more enterprise than the comatose Bazaine it is probable that the day would have ended in a German disaster. In fact, only the remarkable marching and fighting power of the Saxon and Pomeranian infantry and sheer weight of numbers saved Moltke from a repulse; 230,000 Germans just contrived to defeat 180,000 French.

The blunders began on the German left. General von Manstein failing to see the strong position and the masses of troops at St. Privat, acted as if it did not exist. He assumed that the French line ended to the south of St. Privat, and, advancing to the attack, found his troops exposed in flank

and rear to artillery and infantry fire. Then it became clear to him that the heights of St. Privat were held, but his infantry were shattered and his artillery almost out of action. Away on the other flank the German attack fared little better. From the highway running through Gravelotte German batteries opened fire on the French left. The French guns seemed to be silenced, the French advanced troops were driven in. "Viewing the situation from Gravelotte," says Moltke, "there remained nothing but pursuit." The truth is that the situation had not been sufficiently explored, the attack had not been sufficiently prepared, and when Steinmetz sent Generals von Goeben and von Zastrow to press this "pursuit," it was found that the French did the pursuing. The French batteries were by no means silenced, the French infantry was by no means in retreat. The advancing German columns were shattered. The French tirailleurs rushed out and swept them back and the fire of the Chassepôts did damage even on the hill from which Steinmetz was watching the battle.

About the same time, five o'clock in the afternoon, another attack on the French right had ended in disaster. Von Manstein

had discovered that St. Privat was in existence, and he sent a division of Guards which had been placed at his orders to the assault. The position was strong and had not been under the fire of artillery. Behind the hedges and fences of a steep slope French riflemen were posted. On the summit of the hill the lofty and massive château of St. Privat was crowded with soldiers.

No wonder that the slaughter among the Guards was tremendous. Within half an hour five battalions lost all or nearly all their officers. Thousands of bodies covered the slope. Still the ranks closed up and pressed on till they came within some 800 paces of St. Privat. They could do no more. They had shot their bolt. The remnant sought protection under the steeper part of the slope and in the shallow trenches hurriedly made by the French riflemen. As a division they had been annihilated.

So on either wing the Germans had suffered disastrous loss. In the centre they had gained no success of importance. If Bazaine had taken the initiative with energy the result of the battle, perhaps of the campaign, might have been different. He did nothing but sit still. Even so the German advance was checked along the whole line. It is said that Moltke, as

he watched his baffled troops, muttered gloomily, "Once more I have learnt that one cannot be too strong on the field of battle."

Fresh strength indeed was at hand. In this moment when we all watch anxiously the desperate efforts of Germany fighting on both frontiers we may well remember that in the darkest hour of Gravelotte it was a corps brought from East Prussia which gave the Germans fresh strength. Bismarck had been wise enough to make sure of the neutrality of Russia before he ventured against France. The eastern frontiers could be safely stripped of troops. Fransecky's corps which marched on to the field in the twilight was made up of Pomeranians, and its station in peace was Königsberg. There are no reinforcements to come from Königsberg in 1914.

The Pomeranians had never been in action. Naturally the last corps to reach the rail head, they had been toiling after the other armies by forced marches, eager to get into the fighting line. When they reached Gravelotte they had been tramping steadily for eighteen hours. On the orders, it is said, of the King himself they were at once put under the command of Steinmetz and hurled at the French left. This was the last of the many blunders at Gravelotte.

Moltke himself acknowledges its gravity. "It would have been better," he writes, "if the Chief of the Staff who was personally on the field at the time had not allowed this movement at so late an hour. A body of troops still completely intact might have been of great value the next day: it was not likely this evening to affect the issue." He might have added that no force which he could command was likely to effect anything by attacking the French left which held a position "made almost impregnable by nature and art," not to be shaken "even by the most devoted bravery and the greatest sacrifices." The discovery might have been made before the battle was over. The Pomeranians were launched into the fight, confused in the medley of the troops already under fire, could gain no ground and so were left till darkness came to their relief.

But meanwhile the issue had been decided ten miles away. After the Guards division had been annihilated on the slope of St. Privat, two brigades of Saxon infantry, which had marched along the entire extent of the battle line, arrived on the French right. Bazaine was aware of the movement and sent a division to support Canrobert. But by somebody's blunder the

reinforcement did not arrive in time and before the Saxon advance Canrobert had to retire. He well understood that the issue of the day was to be decided by this attempt to crush him and he offered a stubborn resistance. The Saxons though they suffered heavy losses were not to be denied. By sundown they were close upon St. Privat at last. The French maintained themselves desperately among the burning houses and not till they found themselves completely surrounded would they surrender. Two thousand prisoners were taken. It was only right to record what does honour to victors and vanquished that the wounded were rescued from the burning village.

After the loss of St. Privat, it was inevitable that the French should fall back. All night the retreat went on amid perpetual skirmishing. The casualties on both sides were very heavy. The French admitted a loss of 13,000. The Germans lost 20,584 of whom as many as 900 were officers. Marvellously successful though the fortnight's campaign had been, it had cost the Germans 50,000 men. To replace that loss was indeed only a question of time, but the heavy slaughter among the officers was irreparable. It is probable that throughout the remainder of the war the

efficiency of the army suffered from the lack of capable and trusted officers. Nevertheless Moltke had cause enough for satisfaction. Precisely a fortnight had gone by since the German armies crossed the frontier. The best of the French troops had been defeated again and again. More than 150,000 of them shattered and disheartened were completely enveloped. For that was the issue of the third act at Metz. Bazaine was caught in a trap with the main military strength of France.

But that night Moltke did not allow himself rest. In the little village of Rezonville you may still see houses marked by tablets to commemorate the fact that in them King William, Bismarck and Moltke spent the night after Gravelotte. The village was full of wounded, and it was hard to find any quarters even for the victorious king. At last he got himself into a little garret, and the staff crowded into another cottage. All through the darkness they were at work upon the demands of the new situation. On the morning of the 19th a whole complex scheme was ready in every detail for the king's approval. If the German soldier knew how to fight, the German staff officer knew how to work.

Vast changes had to be made in the

original plan of campaign, and consequently in the organization of the army. Moltke had never thought of investing Metz. His intention was "to station a corps of observation in the vicinity of the fortress" and march immediately on Paris. It had not occurred to him that an army of more than 150,000 men would let themselves be enveloped and shut up inside Metz. The division of reserves which he had provided for masking the place was at hand, but was of course quite inadequate for the new task. The army, therefore, was reorganized, and advantage was taken of the occasion to get rid of Steinmetz. He had quarrelled with everybody, from the king to his own divisional officers, and he had not distinguished himself by his tactics at Gravelotte, though as to that matter none of his superiors could with much decency be severe. However, he was an intractable man and restive under Moltke's orders, so he went into honourable obscurity as Governor-General of Posen and Silesia, while his army was given to Prince Frederick Charles, who, retaining with it more than half his own command—150,000 in all—was to invest Bazaine and Metz. A new command, the Army of the Meuse, was formed and given

to the Crown Prince of Saxony. He was to join the 3rd Army under the Prussian Crown Prince, and their united strength of 223,000 men would then be directed against the camp at Châlons, where the French were rallying. It will be seen that the army designed to invest Bazaine was rather smaller than Bazaine's own force. Moltke expected that fresh attempts would be made to break out on the west, and therefore ordered the investing force to remain on the left bank of the Moselle. With quiet pride he records that "all these orders were signed by the king and dispatched to the officers in command by eleven o'clock." And that on the morning after such a day as Gravelotte!

CHAPTER V

THE DOOM OF MACMAHON

"A SECOND French army has arisen like a Phoenix in the camp at Châlons." So a contemporary correspondent in Paris reported to London. Most people in Paris and a good many in London were able to believe that the forces which MacMahon was mustering at Châlons about the relics of his first army would yet retrieve the war for France. Ardent Republicans in Paris were not sure that they liked the prospect. After the disasters of the first fortnight of the war "l'Empereur est mort," they said with satisfaction, to correct themselves when they remembered MacMahon with the chastening afterthought, "Mais il n'est pas déjà enterré." One candid member of the party confessed that "the principal cloud which now darkens our political horizon is fear lest a great victory gained by MacMahon and

Bazaine may again make it possible for Napoleon III. to enter the Tuileries."

At Châlons MacMahon had collected about 120,000 men. To the remnants of the army of Wörth was added the division which had been on the Spanish frontier and four regiments of marine infantry. In numbers the army was considerable, but the quality of the troops was not high. The best of them were shaken by defeat. Even after General Trochu, the Governor of Paris, had relieved MacMahon of the worst of them, some battalions of Gardes Mobiles, whose fighting spirit was expended on the wrong side, the morale was bad.

The Emperor reached Châlons with the news that Bazaine was retreating from Metz. Geography offered no great obstacle to the union of the two armies. Bazaine might easily retreat on Verdun, and Verdun was only a few marches from Châlons. Once united, the armies might reasonably hope to check the advance of the Germans. But MacMahon did not know in what direction Bazaine was retreating or even whether he had been able to continue his retreat. A junction with Bazaine was not the only duty he had before him. If Bazaine were out of action, MacMahon's was the only army in being, that is, the

only field army on which Paris could rely for her defence. Already Paris was threatened by the advance of the Crown Prince Frederick's army to the Meuse. Before MacMahon could decide whether to advance towards Bazaine or retreat upon Paris, it was necessary that he should know what Bazaine was really doing.

On the day of Gravelotte, Bazaine sent a mysterious message to Châlons. He had maintained his position, he said, but the troops, before marching further, must have food and ammunition. Whether he really believed this to represent the results of Gravelotte or whether it was a move in some incomprehensible scheme for his own hand we wonder in vain. MacMahon seems to have thought it suspicious, and he resolved to fall back to the north on Rheims. That should be safe, and yet did not commit him to the abandonment of Bazaine. The approach of Prince Frederick's cavalry then inclined him to fall back on Paris. It is commonly said that he was only induced to make an attempt to join hands with Bazaine by direct orders from the Ministry. We may well believe that he considered an advance towards wherever Bazaine might be a mistake, or a choice of the worse of two evils. Nobody

supposes that he was anxious to make the attempt. But the truth seems to be that he was not ruled by Emperor or Empress or Ministry. What sent him forward to meet or relieve Bazaine was a soldierly resolution not to leave his comrades in the lurch if he could help them.

Bazaine did not encourage such loyalty. Bazaine was as mysterious as ever. You can hardly recognize the events of Gravelotte in the reports which reached MacMahon. Bazaine had "held his ground," though, to be sure, "the right wing had changed front." It had indeed. "The troops required two or three days' rest." Rest was the one thing which Bazaine's troops could be sure of winning. He "was still determined to press forward in a northerly direction" and make for Châlons by Montmédy—unless the Germans got in the way. If they did he would march on Sedan. Ominous name.

MacMahon would keep tryst if he could. On August 23rd he began his march, making for Montmédy by way of Stenay. Lest he should miss by delay a chance of joining Bazaine he went off in such a hurry that no adequate provision was made for the march. On the evening of the first day, which ended in heavy rain, the army

found itself without everything which it needed. Even food was hard to come by. Such experiences were not likely to increase either the fighting or the marching power of a disheartened army. To victual his troops MacMahon had to move on Rethel, that is, to make a considerable detour to the northward. At the end of three days' marching he was not much nearer to Bazaine than when he started.

Moltke had thought it probable that MacMahon would choose to retreat on Paris. The German dispositions were therefore designed to drive him off that line to the northward. The armies of the two Crown Princes, some twelve miles apart, marched nearly due westward on converging lines. We may note that a rather happy-go-lucky attempt to take Verdun and Toul by the way was ineffective. The two fortresses however were of no particular use to the French. It is to be remembered that in 1870 their defences were of a much feebler character than to-day.

The day after MacMahon had marched northward, advanced parties of the German cavalry tumbled into his deserted camp at Châlons. They had a pleasant time of it, these Rhenish dragoons, for,

though the abandoned stores had been burnt, they "found plenty of loot." What was more to the purpose they found some suggestive information. A letter from a French officer which fell into their hands implied that MacMahon meant to relieve Metz. Another communication stated that he had entrenched himself with 150,000 men at Rheims. This last piece of news, fallacious as we have seen, was confirmed by the Paris newspapers. Though it was not actually true, it did not confuse the situation when interpreted in the light of the first letter about the intention to relieve Metz. For a position at Rheims, though not necessarily, might quite naturally be the first move of a plan to join Bazaine. There is no doubt that Moltke was in some perplexity. He had not expected such a move. He had laid his plans for something quite different, and though in theory he admitted the necessity of constant change of decisions in war, he much preferred that everything should go on with the smoothness of "pre-ordination." He complains rather naïvely that "it is always a serious matter to abandon without the most pressing necessity a once-settled and well-devised plan for a new and unprepared scheme."

Just at this moment too were heard the first rumblings and mutterings of a storm which the General Staff had not expected, which therefore annoyed them excessively—another attempt to interfere with the decrees of Prussian providence and pre-ordination—and which, if it embittered the war and postponed without affecting the ultimate result was to give Moltke many an anxious moment. This new factor may be simply stated. It was the sudden outbreak of a national resistance.

The Prussian theory of the war was that they were fighting the Emperor and not the people. The distinction was not in practice closely observed. The peasants in the districts traversed by German troops and particularly in the departments of the Meuse and the forest of the Argonnes began to discover that the invading forces were ruthless in their exactions and of a ferocious arrogance. It is not every general who will or can keep victorious troops under the iron restraint which Wellington enforced. Even in 1870 the Prussian doctrine of the rights of a conqueror was brutal enough. A victorious army, said Bismarck, should leave the inhabitants of the districts which it conquers with “nothing but their eyes to weep from.”

Cet animal est très méchant
Quand on l'attaque il se défend.

The French peasant was not superior to this natural impulse. He was very wicked, and when he was plundered he tried to defend himself. "The inhabitants," as Moltke pathetically complains, "became troublesome." There is no reason to believe that at this stage in the war the French Government had, to quote his charge, "organized a general rising." The Government had organized nothing. But it is certain that as soon as the German armies began to extend their operations in French territory they were subject to perpetual harassing attacks from skirmishing parties of armed civilians. These were the *Francs-tireurs*, the "free-shooters." At first they had no sort of military organization and the Germans declined to allow them the rights of war. If they were captured they were shot. Later on, they were formed into regular corps and duly recognized as combatants, but with that development we are not now concerned. In these first months of the campaign they carried on guerilla fighting much like that which harassed Napoleon's armies in Spain. They beset isolated detachments and cut

off foraging parties. Allowing for its partizan spirit Moltke's judgment on their operations is not unfair. "Though not affecting the operations on a large scale," he says, "they were a source of much annoyance to small expeditions; and as it naturally harassed the soldiers to feel that they were not safe by day or night, the character of the war became more embittered and increased the sufferings of the people." There is no doubt that in the fighting of the *Francs-tireurs*, the brutalities were not all on one side. Outrage was repaid by outrage and led to fresh outrage. Therefore impartial critics have argued that this undisciplined, irregular, non-military fighting did France more harm than good. This may be true. But the maxim, *à la guerre comme à la guerre*, always in favour with militarism, has its application to the guerilla warfare of the *Francs-tireurs*. When once the brutal forces of war have been let loose, it is impossible to be sure that the most long-suffering of civilian populations will remain quiet. The operations of the *Francs-tireurs* may have been unreasonable, and in the balance disastrous to the people they sought to serve. But unhappily reason is unheard in the clash of arms. Moreover if we take a view

of warfare which admits the existence of other than material force we may doubt whether the operations of the Francs-tireurs were as useless as purely military critics suppose. It is not to be denied that their exploits and sufferings had a share in rousing the spirit of France to the marvellous efforts of *la Défense Nationale*.

But that was still hidden in the mystery of the future. Neither Moltke nor MacMahon could see through the urgent difficulties of the hour any sign of the awakening of France. Moltke found it almost impossible to believe that MacMahon meant to do what the intercepted letters seemed to suggest, and what in fact he was trying to do. "In war," it was Moltke's maxim, "probabilities alone have often to be reckoned with; and the probability as a rule is that the enemy will do the right thing. It could not be thought probable that the French army would leave Paris unprotected and march by the Belgian frontier to Metz. Such a move seemed strange and somewhat foolhardy: still it was possible."

So on August 25th Moltke changed his plans. A scheme of marches was worked out which would concentrate 150,000 men

on the right bank of the Meuse to the north of Verdun. He did it with much anxiety. "Endless difficulties might result from such a course: the arrangements for bringing up baggage and reserves would have to be cancelled and the confidence of the troops in their commanders was liable to be shaken if they were called upon to perform fruitless marches."

On the afternoon of the same day fresh news came to hand which proved that the marches were not to be fruitless. In 1870 the lesson that newspapers must be gagged in time of war had not been learnt or even dreamed of. The Prussian General Staff well knew the value of the Paris press and studied its emotions carefully. Newspapers reached Moltke in which were reported speeches proclaiming "that the French general leaving his comrade in the lurch was bringing the curses of the country upon his head." To leave the heroic Bazaine without relief, as Paris thought, would be a disgrace to the French nation.

"Considering the effect of such phrases upon the French," is Moltke's sardonic comment, "it was to be expected that military considerations would give way to political." He had just reached that

conclusion when again the French newspapers came to his assistance. The *Temps* had published a statement to the effect that "MacMahon had suddenly resolved to hasten to the assistance of Bazaine though the abandonment of the road to Paris placed the country in danger." This momentous news was of course immediately telegraphed to London. The German embassy in London lost no time in telegraphing it to the Prussian headquarters. So much for the uses of newspapers in time of war.

There was no more need for hesitation. The new orders were immediately dispatched to the various commanders. The northward march was begun. Cavalry were sent out in every direction and soon reports came in which confirmed the roundabout telegrams. MacMahon was certainly marching northward. It was no less certain that his march was marvellously slow. Everything in fact was going just as Moltke could have wished if he had himself dictated the movements of the French.

That the Germans were after him MacMahon soon discovered. But his information must have been rather highly coloured. At Vouziers one corps was kept under arms all

night in a rain-storm to repel an immediate attack which the Germans had neither the power nor the intention of making. They were still miles out of striking distance. MacMahon, however, was thoroughly alarmed, and not without reason. He did not know and could not find out—so good was the German cavalry screen—how many men Moltke was bringing against him. He had excellent reasons for doubting the ability of his own men to deal with equal numbers.

It has been suggested that the right thing for MacMahon to do would have been to turn upon the pursuing Germans. If he had won, he would have been out of his difficulties. If he had lost, he should have been able to withdraw his army without utter disaster from an enterprise which proved impracticable. A defeat would have been better than a march into a trap. We may doubt whether, in the situation and with the troops engaged, there was any practicable way of escape from catastrophe.

MacMahon's cavalry reached the Meuse at Beaumont, just below Stenay, on August 27th. Their mission, of course, was to look for Bazaine, who had had time enough to get there if he was coming. They discovered that nothing had been seen of him

and his army, and that in all probability he had never moved an inch from Metz. After that MacMahon concluded that he had done enough or more than enough for honour. He decided to retreat, and informed Paris of his decision and his reasons.

The Government could not be expected to judge the situation by purely military considerations. Even in time of war it is the business of governments to give political and moral arguments due weight. In all large military operations some regard has to be paid to other principles than those of pure strategy. Every great war, indeed, sees many a compromise between strategy and policy, sometimes good and sometimes bad in their consequences. But the French ministry which interfered with MacMahon could hardly plead sound political reasons. All through the night of August 27th the wires were buzzing protests from Paris. Finally the Ministerial Council telegraphed a direct order that Metz must be relieved. For that, futile as it was, some sort of defence may be made. There was reason to think that if Bazaine was lost France was lost. It could be argued that MacMahon and his men had better strike a gallant blow than

fall back ingloriously on Paris. But the truth is that the powers in Paris had no such honourable reasons for their interference. It was not France or her honour that they were trying to preserve, but the *régime* of the Second Empire. The Minister of War let the cat out of the bag. "If you leave Bazaine in the lurch, revolution will break out," he telegraphed, and he was right. Everything that was sound and wholesome in France was passionately eager for an end of the system which had brought upon her the humiliation of this disastrous war. It was already doubtful whether revolution could long be deferred. Even the placemen of the Tuileries knew that. Any further disgrace to the French arms would certainly cause an explosion. So the unhappy MacMahon had to be spurred on to his fate. With egregious insolence the ministry proceeded to instruct him upon the military situation. Things were not, he was assured, so bad as he believed. The Germans near him were really only part of the investing army. What could be easier than to cut through them? As for forces upon his rear, they were quite a long way off, and somewhere or other there were more French forces in being.

What MacMahon thought of this wonderful version of the situation we may guess. But he was the most loyal of generals. He would obey orders, though he lost his army. He would serve the interests of his emperor to the last breath. Once more he changed his plans and turned his army towards the east. There was naturally confusion. The men who had, as an inevitable consequence of such a maze of marching, quite lost confidence in their leaders were in the worst spirits. They had to march till long after dark to reach their quarters, and they encamped tired out and wet through. Never did an army begin a desperate enterprise with lower spirits.

Moltke, who had not yet perfected the arrangements of his trap, left the French to go where they would. His cavalry were told not to check or harass or divert the march. The French were to be politely escorted, not attacked. For two days this was the *mot d'ordre*. Still the unhappy MacMahon found difficulties grow upon him. He wanted to cross to the eastern bank of the Meuse. The bridges were broken, and of course he had no pontoons. So again he turned northward. Then came more confusion. General de Failly was to have

marched his corps on Beaumont. The staff officer carrying the orders—they were not sent in duplicate—was captured. So Faily, following an earlier plan, marched on Stenay. As usual, when the supreme command vacillates, it seemed as if the very stars in their courses were fighting against the army.

This ill-luck with the orders to Faily was to be one of the decisive factors in the fortunes of the army. MacMahon determined that on August 30th his whole army, having crossed where they could, should concentrate on the east bank of the Meuse. The Germans were close upon them. Moltke laid his plans for the armies of the two Crown Princes to unite and attack the French before they could cross the river.

Now Faily's corps, having gone wandering off to Stenay, only reached its proper destination, Beaumont, at four in the morning, after a long night march. The men were worn out. Faily decided that they must have a meal before they went on. They took their time over cooking it, which was a mistake. They set no outposts, which was perhaps the most stupendous blunder of the war. For they must have known that the Germans were treading

on their heels. But who was ever more surprised than Faily's troops when, as they sat at dinner, the German shells began to burst among the cooking pots?

They tried to recover themselves by hard fighting. It was impossible. The German divisions stormed into their camp and scattered them. Among the woods and swamps of the Meuse valley other French divisions fared not much better. The German advance was expensive, and in killed and wounded they suffered more severely than the French. But the French retreat became more and more like a rout. Many guns and a large number of prisoners were taken.

MacMahon determined to concentrate on the little fortress of Sedan. He did not hope or intend to make a stand there, but his troops, worn out by day and night marching in continuous rain and on short rations, could do no more without rest. Unless they had a short breathing space he could not even provide them with food and ammunition. As the wagons of the supply columns passed into Sedan they were beset by "thousands of fugitives crying for bread." Even the divisions which were comparatively unshaken

marched in in a sorry plight. So exhausted in body and spirit was the army that even such elementary precautions as the breaking down of bridges were neglected. When the Emperor arrived late in the evening of the 30th, he must have guessed that nothing but disaster awaited him.

“The Story of Sedan” has been told in another volume of this series. It is therefore not necessary to describe the battle in detail. But the briefest history of the war would have been incomplete without some study of MacMahon’s disastrous march from Châlons. For in the events of that week we can find most vividly illustrated all the causes which led to the humiliation of France. The attempt of a rotten government to use the war as a means of prolonging its own existence—the lack of unity in the nation—the lack of enthusiasm in the army—the inefficiency of general officers—the inadequacy of commissariat—all these are written large in the doom of the unfortunate MacMahon. The lesson is there for all nations to read.

CHAPTER VI

EXIT THE EMPEROR

CERTAINLY MacMahon was not a great commander. To achieve the task which was set him with the army which was given him he must have been a Napoleon or a Marlborough. In his conduct of the march from Châlons we can indeed find no military qualities more distinguished than loyalty and obedience, but his difficulties are hardly to be exaggerated. It may well be argued that under such conditions ultimate disaster could only have been avoided by a miracle, and the dispositions of Moltke did not encourage miracles to happen. Consider the elements of the situation. Given seven army corps in the high spirits of victory and capable of marching 15 miles a day for a week, opposed to four corps shaken by defeat, who could only make 5 miles a day, what must be the result ? MacMahon, as the man doomed to command those helpless four corps, deserves all the sympathy due to a brave man struggling against irresistible force.

At last he had a whiff of good fortune. The movements to envelop Sedan more closely began early in the morning of September 1st. A tremendous artillery fire was concentrated on the neighbouring village of Bazeilles. MacMahon was struck by a splinter of shell. At last he could with honour give up his command. It devolved on General von Wimpffen, who had just returned from Algiers in time to share in the great disaster which he had done nothing to cause.

MacMahon had intended to retreat down the valley of the Meuse to Mézières, and dispositions had already been made for this purpose when Von Wimpffen took over the command. He thought that further retreat would be impossible or disastrous. For the army of the Prussian Crown Prince was already between Mézières and him. He resolved to make his effort in exactly the opposite direction. He hoped to break through the lines of the Crown Prince of Saxony to the south-east, force his way to Carignan and so at last join hands with Bazaine.

The first event in the French advance was that they came upon heavy artillery fire and were driven back. Then they found that in infantry as well as artillery the Saxons were superior. In a few hours the attempt to escape eastwards had failed.

Meanwhile the Crown Prince Frederick advanced to cut off the French line of retreat to the west. That was done almost without opposition. On three sides, south, east and west, the French army was beset. The next step was to send fresh troops to complete the envelopment, to plunge in between Sedan and the Belgian frontier, to close the avenue of escape to northward.

Some days before, the possibility of a French retreat into Belgium had been considered by Bismarck and Moltke. In those days some respect for neutrality and treaties and the opinion of the civilized world was still considered necessary by Prussia. The statesmanship of Bismarck was not scrupulous but at least he understood that a crime may be a blunder too. He did not tell the world that German troops were to march across the Belgian frontier because the General Staff was afraid that the French might some day. He made representations in Brussels, to which no exception can be taken by the most austere international morality. There was reason to believe, said the Prussian Ambassador, that MacMahon's army might retreat across the Belgian frontier. In that event, the King of Prussia relied upon the Belgian Government to maintain its neutrality and disarm

the invaders. But if the Belgians failed to perform their obligations, the German troops would be compelled to cross the frontier and complete the French defeat. It does not appear that Bismarck had any great confidence in the Belgian power to remain neutral. Belgian troops were on the frontier, but, as he complained with a characteristic scorn of everything small, they seemed to be of no account; the soldiers he had seen were "all overcoat."

So the German commanders strained every nerve to save the Belgians trouble. General von Kirchbach forced his way round to the north of the French army, flinging back a desperate attack delivered by the cavalry under the Marquis de Galliffet. A corresponding advance was made by the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, and by ten o'clock in the morning of that September 1st, the internment of the French was almost complete. All round the investing lines the French made desperate if spasmodic efforts to break through. But at every point they found the Germans too strong for them. Early in the day the French artillery was everywhere mastered. Batteries were not merely put out of action but destroyed.

In the afternoon the French cavalry

made one more gallant effort to change the fortune of the day. General Margueritte brought five regiments of light horse and two of lancers into action. He was severely wounded in the first shock. Shot through the mouth, he could give no orders but mutely pointed with his sword at the German ranks. The command fell to the Marquis de Galliffet. The French cavalry charged out of the Bois de Garennes, found themselves on treacherous ground and were shattered by the flanking fire of the German artillery. Still the heroic cavalry struggled on. They crashed upon the infantry but were received with volley fire at short range which mowed them down by squadrons. "Many fell into the quarries or over the steep precipices. A few may have escaped by swimming the Meuse. Scarcely more than half of these brave troops were left to return to the protection of the fortress."

No more magnificent feat of arms, no more heroic sacrifice was consummated in all the war. But the courage and the devotion were all in vain. The Prussian infantry were unshaken. They closed in with new ardour upon the retreating French. Meanwhile, on the original line of the French attack to eastward, the Germans were no less successful. There the spirit of the French

troops was soon broken. Prisoners were taken by hundreds. Twenty-one German batteries were brought into line and concentrated their fire upon Sedan. Soon flames were seen rising from the town. The Bavarians advanced to the assault and were about to force the gates when the white flag was seen. It was half-past four in the afternoon.

The order to raise a flag of truce came from the Emperor himself. In a little while there was brought to the presence of the King of Prussia General Reille. He presented an autograph letter from the Emperor. Having been unable to die in the midst of his troops, as he would have chosen, so Napoleon wrote, nothing remained for him but to place his sword in the hands of King William. Afterwards in Paris and even in towns less concerned, cruel sarcasms were passed on that letter. Its form no doubt does invite mockery. But a calm judgment, while not palliating the blunders and crimes of Napoleon III., will see little matter for sneers in his humiliation at Sedan. He would no doubt have left a fairer memory if he had died among his soldiers. But to jeer because an invalid does not keep his place in the firing line is not a valuable form of criticism.

Neither sympathy nor mockery he found

from the powers that ruled the Prussian policy—Bismarck and Moltke. Where the Emperor “placed his sword” was insignificant. The only answer he had to his fine phrases was a demand that an officer should be sent with full powers to treat for the surrender of the French army.

Even Moltke, who seldom had emotions to spare for the plight of his enemies, pauses a moment in his austere narrative of events to sympathize with the man who having been with the French army only a few hours, having succeeded to the command only that morning, had to negotiate an unconditional surrender in the evening. “This sorrowful duty,” he notes, “was imposed on General von Wimpffen, who was in no way responsible for the desperate straits into which the army had been brought.” And a French soldier must indeed be blameless for Moltke to find excuses for him.

All through the night between September 1st and 2nd, negotiations went on at Donchéry. It is remarkable that Moltke afterwards thought it necessary to explain if not to apologise for the severity of the terms of surrender. He would accept nothing less than the disarmament and detention of the whole army, though he was ready to let the officers go free on parole.

Such a course, he says, was inevitable because "any act of untimely generosity might lead the French to forget their defeat." It was in fact desirable for Prussian prestige, if not necessary to Prussian safety that France should drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs. Perhaps his foresight was not as clear and did not reach as far as he supposed. But "untimely generosity" has never been a vice of Prussian policy.

The luckless Von Wimpffen protested vehemently against the ignominy of such a surrender. He was told that unless the terms were agreed to by nine o'clock in the morning the bombardment would be renewed. And the Germans had five hundred guns in position. It is said that during this grim parley by night the price which Prussia meant to make France pay for the war was first threatened. When Von Wimpffen was urging his claim to a more honourable capitulation, and pleading that if his army yielded themselves up, Germany ought to consider that she had gained enough and push the war no further, Bismarck broke roughly in. Far more than the surrender of armies Prussia would ask before she stayed her hand. The spoils were to the victors. When France sued for peace, Prussia would exact not only four billions

of francs but Alsace and German Lorraine.

In after years Bismarck sometimes wished the world to understand that in this matter of the provinces he was overruled by Moltke and the General Staff. For himself, he would have been content with a vast war indemnity. It was the soldiers who insisted that France must be mutilated. They wanted a frontier which would be difficult for France to attack, and give them the advantage in an attack on France.

We should no doubt be foolish to believe all that Bismarck wished us to believe. But it is possible that he saw dangers which the soldiers did not see or did not wish to see. When Von Wimpffen heard this cruel sentence on his country pronounced he broke out passionately: "Demand only money and you will be sure of peace with us for an indefinite period. If you take from us Alsace and Lorraine you will only have a truce for a time. In France from old men down to children all will learn the use of arms, and millions of soldiers one day will demand of you what you take from us." For forty-four years Europe has waited the fulfilment of that prophecy. For forty-four years Germany has always had to count upon the

implacable resentment of France, and make that the first consideration of her policy. No wonder if Bismarck sometimes asked himself whether it was worth while. When he suggested that it was the strategist and not the statesman who tore Alsace and Lorraine from France he confessed that the statesman blundered. For if the strategy which is governed by questions of policy is dubious, the policy which is ruled by strategy is a snare. Forty-four years have gone by, and now on each frontier Germany faces millions of men in arms. Whatever the issue of the war, would it not have been cheaper to make a friend of France when France could have been won by a trifle of "untimely generosity?"

But there was no generosity in the little ill-lit room in Donchéry. Surrender or be pounded to atoms was the choice forced upon Von Wimpffen, and surrender he did. Never in the history of civilized warfare has there been such a victory or such a humiliation. When the great Napoleon surrounded the Austrians at Ulm some 30,000 men were taken and that was thought a stupendous feat. The army which Napoléon le Petit brought to Sedan yielded 21,000 prisoners in the fighting, and 83,000 laid down their arms. Every

year since, Germany has celebrated the day of the surrender, September 2nd, as a great national festival. Will she be still rejoicing on September 2nd, 1915? After the surrender Bismarck was talking to the American general Sheridan and an Englishman upon the field. An aide-de-camp eager to celebrate the great event produced from somewhere two bottles of Belgian beer. In that modest fluid, Prussian, American and Englishman drank Bismarck's toast "to the nearer union of the three great Teuton peoples." There is a grim irony about that in 1914. And that the beer should have been Belgian!

But words for Germany of more tragic irony still came from Bismarck's lips on that day. He was congratulated on the victory. "Oh, my dear sir," he protested, "I am no strategist. It is not my business to win battles. But here are Bavarians, Wurttemburgers, Saxons, all fighting together with Prussians in one army. That is what I am proud of. That is my work." The victory of Sedan was indeed made possible only by the victory of Prussian diplomacy. What does the world think of the Prussian diplomacy of 1914?

"With the surrender of this army," says Moltke curtly, "Imperialism in France

became extinct." The unhappy Emperor doubtless had no delusions about the fate of his throne. But at least he was more manly in disaster than the greater Napoleon. "He was cast down," the King of Prussia wrote, "but dignified in bearing and resigned."

Resignation was not a virtue to be expected of the nation which his rule had brought to such shame. On the evening of September 2nd the Empress Eugénie learnt of the surrender. For a whole day she and her advisers hesitated and faltered. But the news, of course, could not be kept secret. It came upon Paris like a storm from a clear sky, for Paris had been confident that MacMahon would fight his way to Bazaine and the two great armies still defy the Prussians. The government which had fed France with assurances of certain victory had only itself to thank for the cry "*Nous sommes trahis.*" When the National Assembly met on the 4th, Palikao the Prime Minister announced pathetically that he was now going to tell the truth. Then Jules Favre, the leader of the Republicans, rose to ask: "Does the Emperor still give orders?" "No," said Palikao. "If it be so," Favre answered, "actual government has ceased to exist

and the people has retaken its rights." That was the real proclamation of the Third Republic.

Excited crowds invaded the chamber and the sitting was perforce dissolved. That afternoon from the Hôtel de Ville formal proclamation of the Republic was made and in its name the deputies of Paris met as a provisional government. Next day they formed a ministry in which Jules Favre held the foreign office, and a greater man, Léon Gambetta, was minister of the interior. From that day began the building of the new France, with its one aim through all vicissitudes—the restoration of the French spirit and French influence to their rightful place in civilization.

CHAPTER VII

THE MYSTERY OF BAZAINE

So the army which was to deliver Bazaine fell upon ruin. What of Bazaine the while ? While MacMahon's wretched men toiled through the miry lanes of Champagne, eyes aflame with hunger, belts drawn tighter over emptiness at each bivouac, while the mad march to relieve the invested army was dragging on to disaster, what was that invested army doing for itself ? MacMahon was borne away a wounded prisoner. What of Bazaine ? Among those who shared the misery and the shame of Sedan many asked that question with oaths and tears. All France thundered it out with a vehemence which drove Bazaine into disgrace and exile. Criticism, military and historical, has asked it often enough since. What of Bazaine ? A judicial historian would probably confess that even now there is no certain answer.

In one sense of course the answer is obvious. The furious prisoners of Sedan

wanted to know what Bazaine had done for himself or for them in all that fortnight through which they were spending themselves in a wild effort to rescue him. What did Bazaine do? Nothing. But when we ask the much more interesting question, why did he do no more, we find ourselves in a maze of enigmas and for any solution we have to turn from military historians to psychology.

First let us have the facts. There is indeed not much interest in the story of the leaguer of Metz. What interest could there be in reading how a general with 170,000 men was content to do nothing at the great crisis of a war and his country's safety? Whether to write or read the story of a man's progress in making himself negligible is a dull page. But if the facts are in themselves tedious and uninspiring, the problems of human nature which they suggest are fascinating by their very obscurity.

Two days after Gravelotte, Bazaine wrote to Châlons. "I will give due notice of my march if I am able to attempt it." Three days later he announced to the Emperor, "If the news of the extensive reductions in the besieging army is corroborated, I shall begin to march by way of the

fortresses on the north to risk nothing." Perhaps not even his Emperor expected Bazaine to risk much. But was a marshal of France ever before so blandly content to write himself down no hero? Bazaine was invested, to be sure, and his troops disheartened by defeat, but he had still 170,000 of them and the fate of France was in the balance. Conceive a marshal of the greater Napoleon professing in such circumstances that his guiding principle would be "to risk nothing!"

It was more than a week after the defeat at Gravelotte before Bazaine made his first move. On August 26th his main forces were collected on the right bank of the Moselle. The advanced guard drove in the German outposts. Then the incredible happened. Instead of ordering an attack Bazaine called a council of war. It was announced to the officers that there was ammunition for one battle only. It was pointed out to them that when that was exhausted the army would be enveloped without the means of defence. Victory, you observe, is assumed to be impossible. It was added that the fortress could not stand a siege if the army did break its way out. Finally and with great emphasis the unhappy generals were told

“that the best service they could render to their country was to preserve the army, which would be of the greatest importance if negotiations for peace should be entered into.”

Each succeeding sentence in this oration is more amazing. You can hardly believe in the face of overwhelming evidence that a word of it was ever spoken. What can Bazaine have intended? Let us leave that large question till the whole tale of Metz is told. But one question, minor indeed, yet even more baffling, must be put at once. Whatever he intended, why did he behave with such stupendous folly? He must have known how much ammunition he had before he put his army into motion. If the supply was not enough to justify him in fighting why did he move at all? Was it to make a parade of activity? Who would be impressed? Not the common soldier, to whom nothing but utter defeat is more depressing than futile marching to and fro. Not the generals, who must have been appalled by the folly of the affair. Above all, not France, which was feverishly crying for action. It seems idle to suppose that Bazaine himself can have seen nothing odd in such conduct. After all he had risen by ability as much

as court favour. He was not altogether stupid. The truth seems to be that he was one of the men who always prefer to gain their ends by trickery. He did not mean to fight. He wanted to have the decision of a council of war to justify himself. So he chose this preposterous way of compelling his generals to vote for inaction.

Vote for inaction they did, and it is impossible to blame them. Whatever they may have thought of the situation and Bazaine's performances, it is not to be expected that any man would wish to fight a desperate battle under the command of Bazaine. So the Marshal "who had refrained," we are drily told, "from expressing any opinion on the matter," won the support of his council of war for the order to retire which he gave. In his report to the Minister of War he stated that lack of artillery ammunition made it "impossible" to break out unless he were assisted by another French army. And he demanded information as to what "the voice of the people" was saying.

Five days later he came to fighting after all. He knew by that time of MacMahon's march to relieve him. It was "impossible"—that favourite word of Bazaine!—not

to make some answering effort. Even Bazaine must have seen that if he did not make some pretence of helping himself he was for ever dishonoured. It is not easy to be quite fair in judging the man. He put so many obstacles in the way of giving him credit for what soldierly qualities he had. But we ought not to doubt his personal courage, and though we may with reason suspect his loyalty to his fellow commanders, it is probable that he had sufficient soldierly instinct to feel that he really wished to do something to support MacMahon.

He made his attempt to northward, which in Moltke's opinion was a mistake. The country in that region was indeed very difficult. But considering that MacMahon had marched northward it is hard to blame Bazaine for his choice. At first the French had the advantage, bringing into action a force much greater than Manteuffel's command, which was the part of the investing army opposed to them. The first day saw the battle undecided.

The morning of September 1st saw the plain covered in thick mist. Before fresh fighting began Bazaine's resolution failed him. He called his generals together and announced that failing the capture of what

he took to be the key of the German position he proposed to retreat immediately under the guns of the fortress. He showed, as Moltke sneers, "great lack of confidence in his own success." The French nevertheless fought better than their commander deserved, but they gained no ground against far inferior forces, and about noon Bazaine sounded the retreat. "On the same day and the same hour as the destruction of one French army was completed at Sedan, the other returned to almost hopeless internment at Metz." It was a vast triumph for the Prussian arms and the Prussian system. No wonder that Moltke allows his cold narrative one phrase of pride. "Thus the issue of the war had already been decided after only two months' duration," he writes, "though the war itself was far from ended." How far indeed he little guessed when he forced the surrender of Sedan.

But with Bazaine's wretched army all was over. The city of Metz had food for more than three months, the fortress garrison for five, but Bazaine's troops were only provisioned for forty days. The investment became a blockade and not a siege, for the Germans had no artillery capable of mastering the fortress guns.

At the end of a month provisions were scarce, and by the beginning of October Bazaine tried to negotiate a capitulation; but the Germans would only hear of unconditional surrender, and Bazaine demanded that his army should march out free. By the twentieth of October bread and salt failed and the troops were eating horseflesh. The condition of the camp on sodden clay was intolerable. Riots broke out in the army. Men let themselves be captured for the sake of a meal. On the 24th Bazaine again began to parley. He suggested that he might be permitted to take his army off to Algiers or failing that an armistice and the entry of stores should be granted. The Germans demanded possession of the fortress and the whole garrison as prisoners. The capitulation was signed on October 27th. On the 29th "the French troops marched out by six roads in perfect silence and good marching order. At each gate a Prussian Army Corps stood to take the prisoners who were immediately placed in bivouacs that had been prepared for them and supplied with food. The officers were allowed to keep their swords and to return to Metz for the time. Provisions were immediately sent in." 173,000 officers and men were taken

and to these must be added 20,000 sick in hospital. Altogether nearly 200,000 fighting men fell into the hands of Prince Frederick Charles. The history of war records few disasters so great, perhaps none more ignominious.

After the war was over Bazaine was brought before a court-martial. By an ironic turn of fate MacMahon was made to sit in judgment on the man whom he had failed to relieve. Yet we may allow some tragic justice in the choice of a judge. Whatever we may think of MacMahon and the army which he led to Sedan, it is obvious that they dared the folly which ruined them for Bazaine's sake and that but for the stupendous inertia of Bazaine they might have escaped with something less than utter disaster.

All France demanded vengeance on the "traitor." We can hardly wonder that such a charge was made. We may well refuse to give any importance to the sneers which suggest that Bazaine's only real offence was the shock he gave to the national vanity of France and that but for the ignoble French habit of "demanding a 'traitor' to account for defeat" no one would ever have dreamed of assailing Bazaine. No nation has ever been free

from the tendency to seek a scapegoat on whom to place the blame of disaster. Not only in French has the cry *Nous sommes trahies* been heard.

Of treason in any precise sense Bazaine must indeed be acquitted. There is no evidence at all that he did not act for what he believed to be the interests of France. But it is impossible to read the shameful story of the blockade of Metz without admitting that if punishment ought to be inflicted on generals for incompetence, for lack of energy, for over caution, France was in the right to punish Bazaine. A nation which allowed Byng to be shot, Lord George Sackville to be cashiered, never forgave Cumberland the Convention of Klosterseven, or Burrard and Dalrymple the Convention of Cintra, has no right to blame the French for bringing Bazaine before a court-martial. He was found guilty of "having failed to do his duty," and sentenced to degradation and death. This was commuted to twenty years' imprisonment and, as he contrived or was permitted to escape after one year in a fortress and lived on till 1888, we need not be extravagant in our pity.

But impartial history, if it has no right to extenuate Bazaine's conduct must faith



BAZAINE.



CAN ROBERT.

fully explain all the difficulties of his position. "There is no doubt," says Moltke, who was not inclined to judge him harshly, "that Bazaine was influenced not only by military, but by political considerations." In the ordinary circumstances of war there could be no more damning criticism upon a commander. His business is to leave politics to his government and consider nothing but strategy. The government indeed may be right to limit his operations by "political considerations." Then the responsibility for any disasters so caused falls to the government. But Bazaine of his own choice acted from political motives. Every party in France wanted him to throw all his forces on the Germans in an attempt to break out from Metz. Before Sedan and after he made it plain that his one purpose was to keep his great army intact under his own command. What might happen to MacMahon or to France was comparatively of no importance.

In the ordinary circumstances of war, it must be repeated, such conduct would have been without excuse. But the circumstances were not ordinary. Before Sedan the Imperial government was tottering. After Sedan it fell. Bazaine had sworn his oaths of fidelity to the Emperor.

There is little doubt that he considered his duty to the Emperor paramount, that he considered himself free from any allegiance to the Republic which established itself on the ruins of the Empire. Probably he hoped that he might keep his army in being till the conclusion of peace. Then, as the head of an overwhelming army in a France broken and spiritless, he might again establish the Empire.

But this theory, true though it may be, does not solve all the mystery of Bazaine. He was loyal, we assume, to the Emperor. That may account for his inaction after Sedan. But what can explain his inaction before? Loyalty to the Emperor and every other emotion which a soldier of France could feel must surely have wrought upon him to stake every man on an effort to save MacMahon, save the Emperor while yet there was time, and so save France. How we interpret his unheroic caution must depend rather on our view of human nature than an estimate of the military conditions. It has been held that Bazaine's hidden purpose was really not to re-establish the Empire but to establish himself. If peace left him, in Moltke's suggestive phrase, "the strongest man in power" he might have ventured one more



W. Emele]

THE ATTACK ON NUIITS.

[Carlsruhe.

coup d'état. For such suspicions Bazaine indeed had only himself to thank. But we should hesitate to assume treachery for which there is no substantial evidence. If we say that Bazaine was a commander incapable of bold resolution, prone to prefer his own importance to vigorous co-operation and guided above all by a puzzle-headed faith in cunning and futile subtlety, we shall probably have come near to understanding him. One of the worst blunders of the Second Empire was that its system brought such men to the front.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROAD TO PARIS

THOUGH Moltke could claim that the issue of the war was decided when MacMahon was captured and Bazaine driven back upon Metz, he was not at the end of his difficulties. The German losses had been very heavy and the deficiency of officers was found "irremediable." Half the army was still occupied in the investment of Strassburg and Metz. Each mile of advance into hostile country increased the difficulties of supply and diminished the numbers which could be used for active operations. On the morrow of Sedan it was found that only 150,000 men could be mustered to march on Paris. That Paris should be their objective, there was of course no doubt. It was a fundamental principle of Moltke's plan of campaign. While the German army is advancing on a front of fifty miles we may watch the fate of the French frontier fortresses.

Toul and Strassburg were of paramount

importance. Then as now they commanded the great railway which runs from Paris by way of Carlsruhe and Stuttgart into the heart of Germany. So long as Strassburg and Toul were in French hands it was therefore a matter of great difficulty to keep the invading army supplied. The reduction of Toul was entrusted to a division which had been detached to deal with any French raid on the German coast. When the inactivity of the French fleet and the crushing disasters of the French army satisfied Moltke that nothing was to be feared from the sea, this 17th Division was promptly brought up.

In 1870 Toul, though a place of considerable strength, was commanded by high ground outside its defences. It was already closely invested on September 12th when the fresh German troops arrived. On the 18th the siege artillery was brought up. On the 24th sixty-two guns opened fire, and by half past three in the afternoon the white flag was hoisted. The garrison numbered less than 3,000 men. When the Germans entered the city they found that it had suffered little and contained large stores of provisions and forage.

Strassburg gave more trouble. Reasons strategic, political and sentimental all

combined to make its possession of the first importance to both nations. Not only the railway but the Rhine is commanded by Strassburg. While it was in the hands of France, Moltke considered that it was "a standing threat to Germany." Of course the French with precisely equal force could maintain the converse of that proposition. The Rhine is in fact the natural frontier between the nations, and whichever power holds the great fortified bridge heads has an enormous advantage in war. The political and sentimental importance of the place was hardly less. Germany, or at least Prussia, meant to annex Alsace. It was therefore desirable to have Alsace subdued as soon as possible, so that France and the neutral powers might be met with a *fait accompli*. To Alsace, Strassburg was and is the key. Sentiment also was potent. Strassburg in name and partially in population and culture was German. During the French Revolution its university was suppressed as a stronghold of German influence. The theory that the war was being fought for German unity had expanded into the doctrine that it was a crusade for the liberation of provinces once German and a population still German from French supremacy. We

may smile at the notion of Alsace and Lorraine welcoming Prussian rule as liberation or considering themselves by racial ties part of Germany. But the docile German people had adopted the doctrine ardently. Strassburg was certainly the most plausible example that could be found to support it. For all these reasons therefore, every effort was made to force a surrender.

As early as August 11th a German force appeared before the town. It was not in sufficient strength to effect anything of importance. General Urich, the French commandant, had a garrison of 23,000 men. It is characteristic of the French War Office under the Second Empire that there was not among them a single company of engineers. The town was however well supplied with artillery. Just before the end of August the siege began in earnest. General von Werder brought to the walls of the town 40,000 men of the 1st Reserve, with a siege train of 200 field pieces and 88 mortars. "To attain the desired end with the least possible delay," says Moltke bluntly, "an attempt was made contrary to the advice of General Schultz of the Engineers, though with consent from headquarters, to force the town to surrender

by means of a bombardment. The request to remove the women and children had to be refused." Why it "had to be" he does not choose to inform us. But we can read between the lines. The intention was to force the hand of the French commander by inflicting intolerable suffering on the civilian population.

The Prussian doctrine of necessity, of the right of armies to "hack their way" through justice and morality if they can thereby secure a military advantage, had not in 1870 grown to its full stature. There was still a certain delicacy in confessing and even in acting upon the full brutality of the faith that might is right. Moltke himself we may well believe, ruthless as he was, would never have tolerated acts forbidden by the laws of war. His troops did not advance with women and children to shield them from French fire. It is probable that the brutal fool who yesterday destroyed Louvain would have had short shrift from him. But the seeds of the infamy which disgraces the German arms in 1914 are to be found in the principles of 1870. The laws of war justify the bombardment of Strassburg. The laws of war did not require the German commander to spare women and children its horrors.

"War is hell," said Sherman, and war waged without chivalry engulfs us in abysses of unspeakable horror. Moltke and his commanders might claim, and on the whole with justice, that they never transgressed the letter of the law. But to their harsh insistence upon their right to inflict every horror within the law is to be traced the barbarism which now has made German soldiery the abomination of the world. For they were successful, and the little men who have inherited their system have fancied, as weakness will, that their cruelty was the secret of their success.

So the bombardment began. It had been difficult to construct batteries for the siege guns. All over the east of France that autumn was dreary and wet, and the besieging army lived and worked in miserable discomfort. Nevertheless, it was found possible to get a number of the heavy guns into position by August 25th, and that night they opened fire. In a few hours the town broke into flames. On the next morning the Bishop of Strassburg came to the German outposts to ask that the citizens might be spared. But the agony of the citizens was part of the Prussian plan. "Much as the injury of a German town was to be regretted," says

Moltke with a *naïveté* which almost sounds like the cynical frankness of Bismarck, "the firing had to be continued through the night of the 25th, when it was hottest." And then he admits so suddenly that the reader rubs his eyes that, after all, this cruel bombardment of the town was futile. "At the same time," he says, "it was fully acknowledged in headquarters that the end would not be attained by these means and that the more deliberate method of a regular siege must be tried."

In fact the German engineers were right after all. The way to capture a fortress is to attack the fortifications. No amount of "moral effect" produced by bombarding private houses while fortress works remain intact will frighten a resolute garrison. So much for the "necessity" of keeping the women and children inside as targets and the "necessity" of firing upon their houses. It remained to conduct the siege according to the art of war. Parallels were opened. Fresh batteries were built. The duel with the guns of the fortress began. The garrison attempted a sortie which was repulsed. The fortress guns were silenced. On the 3rd of September, General Uhrich asked for a truce to bury the dead. That day his garrison

learnt by the German *feu de jote* of the fall of Sedan.

The rain had been so heavy that the trenches were ankle deep in water. Yet the besieging force maintained their energy. Their batteries were now firing from a short range and the garrison could not man their guns, but relied only on their mortars, which of course the German grape and shrapnel could not reach. The German sappers worked very close to the walls.

In history on such a scale as this there is no scope to celebrate mere incidents however romantic. But the most austere history may well find room for the name of Captain Ledebour, and such a deed as his. When the French found out that an attempt was being made to drive mines in front of the lunettes, Captain Ledebour let himself down by ropes from the walls into the trenches and took out the powder. In the whole course of the war you will hardly find another piece of daring so splendid and so successful.

But there was no respite for Strassburg. On September 15th a German fusilier regiment defying heavy fire contrived to destroy the dam which kept the water in the moat. The batteries were moved still closer to the walls and the rifle pits

were so well used that the French could hardly show themselves by daylight. Shell fire made a breach, and by the 19th the Germans were planning an assault. But the preparations took time. Though the dam of the moat had been broken, the water was still breast high. It was decided to make a cask bridge of beer barrels, of which there was, you hear with a smile, abundance at hand. Still there was more work for the siege guns. The walls of two bastions were shattered and the storming of the inner defences was only a matter of hours.

On the 27th September a white flag was seen on the cathedral tower and firing ceased. The town had stood thirty days of siege. It was still well supplied with stores of all kinds, and the garrison, though diminished, was still strong. But the plight of the townsfolk was miserable. 10,000 people were homeless, 62,000 killed and wounded. Countless public buildings were destroyed. We cannot blame General Urich for his surrender. The fate of the city was certain. He did well to spare the tortured people the outrages of a storm. 17,000 troops were taken prisoners, but that was the least important part of General von Werder's success. Every German

heart exulted in the triumph which saw "the old German town restored by German daring to German rule." With Strassburg fell Alsace. One of the coveted provinces was in the German grasp. The great bridge head was mastered. The main railway from Germany through the east of France was free for the passage of German troops and stores. It was in fact immediately used to carry some of the army which had besieged the town to a like task before Paris.

For before the day of Strassburg's fall Paris itself was invested. There was no considerable force to oppose the march of Moltke's 150,000. With MacMahon's army gone in captivity to Germany, and Bazaine's little more use under the guns of Metz, France was left almost naked of troops. In 1870 there was no force left to make the invader pay as he has paid now for every mile of advance by heavy losses. No fortifications of any importance existed within the frontier save at Paris. Laon capitulated to the first summons of a cavalry division. After the surrender of the town an odd thing happened. The courtyard of the citadel was crowded with French and Germans, prisoners and conquerors, when the magazine exploded upon

them. How or why it was fired still remains unknown. At the time there were stories of treachery. The Germans had been admitted, it was whispered, in order that they might be blown up. For that there is no evidence at all; and as the explosion occurred while many French were still in the citadel, and in fact the French losses were at least thrice as heavy as the Germans and included the commandant himself, the theory of treachery, though not absolutely incredible, may well be dismissed. It is quite possible that the cause of the explosion may have been mere accident. But intention is on the whole probable, and we may suggest that some zealous officer ordered or eager to prevent the ammunition from falling into German hands blew it up at an awkward moment. The incident is not of much historical importance, but as it caused a good deal of bitterness at the time, it seems to deserve a place in this narrative.

The German advance then was unimpeded by any organized force. The hostility of the people on the line of march, though unable to impose any decided obstacles, gave continual trouble. Roads were torn up and bridges broken down. The *Francs-tireurs* skirmished everywhere.

The German advance began on September 4th. In a week the Prussian headquarters were established in Rheims. King William was master of the town in which so many of the kings of France had been crowned. On September 17th a foraging party sent out from Paris was driven back under the guns of the fort at Charenton. The king's headquarters were brought up to Meaux. The investment of Paris was begun. Less than seven weeks had passed since the campaign had opened. In forty-five days almost the whole of the French army had been captured or besieged. With 150,000 men Moltke surrounded Paris. In all the rest of France there was no trained mobile force. Napoleon himself might have been satisfied with success so vast and so swift.

CHAPTER IX

1870—1914

It is probable that the historian in the future considering the causes of the tremendous world warfare of 1914 will decide that it was the natural if not the inevitable consequence of the spirit in which the war of 1870 was fought and ended. Many causes, no doubt, which could not be suspected by Moltke or Bismarck, Thiers or Gambetta, have their part in embittering the present struggle and marshalling new forces on either side. But the faith that the German Empire could only be established by war, could only be maintained by vast armaments and must look to war for fresh strength, is to be traced to the policy of Bismarck and Moltke and their achievements. The Prussian principle that in peace the victor must seek not the conciliation but the maiming of the vanquished has borne fruit in the steady enmity between France and Germany. The growing ferocity of the German armies

as the resistance of France grew more and more stubborn has persuaded Germany that brutality and victory are inseparable allies.

But if we have to trace a close connection between the wars of 1870 and 1914, we note differences of incalculable importance. These lines are written while even the first phase of the conflict of 1914 is undecided. But already on September 1st, the anniversary of Sedan, we know that the German arms are not to fall upon the feeble opposition, enjoy the easy victories and the swift decisions of 1870. Already it is clear that the France of 1914 is fighting the war with a united front, with an amplitude of preparation, with a fervour and resolution which recall not the disasters of 1870 but the tremendous defiance of the days when she flung back the arms of all Europe with Carnot as the organizer of victory. But it is not the stubborn resistance to the German advance, not even the spirit of the new France which is the chief difference between the campaigns of 1870 and 1914.

In 1870 France stood alone. In 1870 the political conditions of the struggle had been determined by the consummate ability of Bismarck. The war of 1914, as we

know, was preluded and conditioned if it was not caused by a stupendous defeat for German diplomacy. The statesmanship of Berlin has contrived to array against itself not merely a France prepared to fight to the end a battle for national existence. It has brought down upon Germany the whole power of Russia inspired by a fervent national faith in the righteousness of the cause. It has forced the dominant sea power and the almost unbounded resources of the British Empire to alliance with its enemies and convinced every dominion, every race, every party under the British flag that the world will have in it no place for honour or justice till Germany has been taught that might is not right.

Germany indeed has one ally on whose friendship she could not count in 1870. Then Austria, though she did not dare to break through her proclaimed neutrality, was hostile in spirit. Now in all the world Austria alone stands with Germany. But we may have suspicions that as the veiled hostility of the Austria of 1870 was of small account to Prussia, her aid in 1914 will be of little help. An empire in hourly dread of disruption, an empire of peoples bitterly inimical to each other held together by no bond but a tottering dynasty, an

empire seeking in a desperate war some relief from the distracting dangers of peace, is not the ally which statesmanship would choose for a conflict against the mass of three of the strongest powers in the world.

What Bismarck would have said of the diplomacy which involved his Prussia in such a plight we may amuse ourselves with imagining. It is certain that he would have thought the Wilhelmstrasse manned by imbeciles if it had proposed to him to involve Germany in the war of 1914. Disciple of the faith in "blood and iron," ardent believer in the might of the Prussian arms as he was, he was always supremely careful that Prussia should never have to fight more than one enemy at a time. When he wanted to tear Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark he made sure first that Austria would join him and the rest of Europe stand aside. When Austria was to be crushed, the neutrality of France and Russia was secured. When it was the turn of France, he chose a time which found Austria *hors de combat*; he played for English sympathy and bribed Russia into neutrality.

The "Government of National Defence and War" which rose in Paris on the ruins of the Empire, sought through Europe for

help in vain. Austria, whose policy was directed by Count Beust, an old and stubborn enemy of Bismarck, would have liked to intervene if she had dared and liked still better to make some other power intervene. Before Sedan several Foreign Offices were hinting at plans of kindly mediation. Gortschakoff, the Russian chancellor, who, though his work has left no such mark on the world as Bismarck's, was gifted with foresight at least not inferior to the Prussian's, let it become known that Russia would disapprove of a demand for the cession of French territory. If French provinces passed to Prussian hands, he said, they would be a perpetual source of enmity between Germany and France, a standing menace to the peace of Europe. The history of fifty years has even too completely fulfilled that prophecy.

Bismarck, whether or no he had originally intended to grasp at Alsace and Lorraine, whether or no he was over-ruled by the General Staff, soon made it understood that the frontier provinces were to be the reward of the conqueror. London was told that he had said privately, "*Wir können nur mit Metz und Strassburg zufrieden sein,*" and eagerly argued about what he meant. Would the Prussians "be content

with" Metz and Strassburg alone and not demand the provinces as well? By the middle of September all speculation was silenced. In two circulars to the ambassadors of the North German Confederation, Bismarck explained that Germany could not after a peace trust to the goodwill of France for her security, and that the German frontier must therefore be extended to include the two fortresses of Strassburg and Metz, the whole of Alsace and the German portion of Lorraine.

A little earlier the French Government of National Defence had declared through Jules Favre that if the King of Prussia continued the war after the Emperor and his ministers had been swept away, France would take up the challenge and yield to the invader "*ni un pouce de notre territoire ni une pierre de nos forteresses*"—"not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses."

Brave words—but unfortunately it was already obvious that their courage would be hard to translate into action. France might prolong the struggle. Could she hope to change its fortune? Not of her own strength perhaps, but there might be aid from without. To tear two provinces from France would make such a change in the European

system that neutral powers might intervene. Thiers volunteered to see what his diplomacy could do. From capital to capital he went, making the grand tour of Europe. In London, in Vienna, in St. Petersburg, in Florence, he received courtesy and sympathy, but not a straw of support. England was under a Gladstonian government which had no taste for any enterprise in foreign policy. The sympathies of the people were rather on the side of Germany than France, and the victory of the Prussian arms was commonly regarded as the triumph of the Puritan virtues. Austria would have intervened if she had dared, but she was still dazed by the blow of Sadowa and could not again challenge Moltke's corps. Beust in much agitation declared "Je ne vois plus d'Europe"—"I see no Europe left." That was an extravagance in 1870, but we who have to resist a fierce effort to make all Europe subject to Prussian domination must admit that Beust had more insight into the realities of the situation than some of his more famous contemporaries.

What of Gortschakoff? He knew well enough, as we have seen, what would come of the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. But Gortschakoff was playing his own hand. He owed nothing to France. Hardly





BISMARCK.



MOLTKE.

fifteen years had gone by since France and England had fought Russia to keep her away from the Balkans and Constantinople. Russian eyes were still turned to the south. By the treaty which ended the Crimean War, Russia was bound to consider the Black Sea neutral, and construct on its shores no naval harbour. Bismarck let Gortschakoff understand that if Russia declined to intervene between France and Germany, Germany would support Russia in denouncing this treaty and in claiming the right to put a navy on the Black Sea. Gortschakoff accepted the bribe. When Thiers came to St. Petersburg he was coldly advised to make peace quickly whatever the sacrifice, for the longer France delayed the more she would have to pay.

Not much was to be hoped from the young and still weak kingdom of Italy. No power which she could wield would have stayed the hand of Prussia. She, like Russia, chose, and is not to be blamed for choosing, to use the difficulties of France for her own ends. It had been part of the tortuous policy of Napoleon III. to keep Rome and the Papal States independent of the new kingdom of Italy which he had done much to create. In 1867 a French army had driven back Garibaldi from his

assault on the Temporal Power. When the necessities of the war with Germany withdrew the French army, Italy seized the moment to consummate her own unity by the capture of Rome. On September 20th, just as the Germans were closing their lines about Paris, Rome was entered by the Italian troops. The ministers of Victor Emmanuel knew that Bismarck would make no trouble for them. Why should they invite his hostility by futile intervention on behalf of the country which had stood between them and their prize?

So France in 1870 found at the hour of her utmost need no friend in all Europe. The wheel has gone full circle. It is not France but her enemy which 1914 sets in that perilous isolation.

CHAPTER X

LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE

ON September 19th the German army closed its lines around Paris. "By the end of October," said Moltke, "I shall be shooting hares at Creisau." His calculations had not revealed to him that some of his most difficult hours were to come. By all the principles of the art of war the campaign had been decided when MacMahon was captured and Bazaine driven back on Metz. But Moltke now had to deal with an adversary who knew very little of the art of war, but understood thoroughly the right policy for a nation in arms to defend its life, "*De l'audace, encore de l'audace et toujours de l'audace*"—"Daring, and again daring and daring always." When the greatest of English war ministers, the elder Pitt, began to show his energy, "England has been long in labour," said Frederick the Great, "but at last she has brought forth a man." Amid the downfall of the shams and dummies of the Second Empire,

France at last gave birth to a man. Léon Gambetta must rank in history not far below the great statesmen of the Revolution, Danton and Carnot. It was not his destiny to be an organizer of victory, but he had not at his command the passionate force of a renascent nation. His miracles had to be wrought with a France which had lost faith in everything, even herself. And miracles they were. The more closely we examine the course of "*La Défense Nationale*," the wonderful campaign of the nation in its own defence, the more we must honour the demoniac energy and the terrible will of Gambetta.

There is here no place for a study of his character. He came from the Midi. When the war broke out he was a young lawyer who had made himself known by fierce denunciations of the Emperor and the Empire, in particular of the Foreign Office and the War Office, the two departments chiefly responsible for the disasters which followed. As soon as the news of Wörth reached Paris he had demanded the appointment of a committee of Public Safety to take over the government and the conduct of the war. When the Empire was overthrown after Sedan he became, as we have seen, Minister of the Interior in the Government

of National Defence. In that capacity he did all that was possible to prepare Paris for a long siege. After the city was invested he escaped in a balloon in order to reach the new seat of Government at Tours. There he assumed the general direction of the war, and till it ended he was in fact, though not in name, Dictator of France. To his enemies he was always what Thiers called him "un fou furieux," a wild madman. He had of course the defects of his qualities, the usual defects of fierce energy and despotic will. He was apt to interfere in things for which he had no capacity. He tried to be commander in chief as well as minister of war, to direct in the field the operations of the armies which he called into being, and no doubt some of his generals—for he discovered some of ability—would have done better if he had left them alone. But we have to remember that without Gambetta the generals would have done nothing at all.

For the worst that can be said of him and his campaign we may turn to Moltke. "Gambetta's rare energy and unrelenting perseverance," he writes, "availed indeed to induce the entire population to take up arms, but not to direct these masses on a uniform plan. Without giving them time to be drilled into fitness for the field, he

sent them out with ruthless cruelty, insufficiently prepared to carry out ill-digested plans against an enemy on whose firm solidity all their courage and devotion must be wrecked. He prolonged the struggle with great sacrifice on both sides without turning the balance in favour of France." Such is the judgment of the enemy. The impartial military critic is more concerned to point out that "nothing but Gambetta's energy enabled France in a few weeks to create and equip twelve army corps," a force of 600,000 men and 1,400 guns, and to emphasize the greatness of that achievement. He is not so certain as Moltke that disaster was its inevitable reward.

You may read between the lines of Moltke's bitter attack resentment not at the "ruthless cruelty" which caused France suffering in vain, but at the impudence of a civilian's daring to prolong the war when professional soldiers knew it was over and at the anxious days which that civilian's improvised troops brought upon the "firm solidity" of Prussian strategy and Prussian battalions. France and Gambetta ought to have known when they were beaten. France and Gambetta ought never to have made it doubtful whether the German armies would be able to keep their grip upon

Paris. When we are asked to blame Gambetta for prolonging the war with useless suffering, we begin to remember that after all, it takes two parties to make a fight. If Gambetta persisted in fighting, so did Moltke, and history before it consents to scold either will enquire what each was fighting for.

There are no mysteries about that. The watchword of the Défense Nationale was "not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses." In the great days of old when revolutionary France was beating back all the armies of Europe she talked officially of "the French Republic, One and Indivisible." You find that headline, for example, above the letters in which Napoleon wrote of his triumphs in Italy. In the darkest hours of 1870 Gambetta made his appeals in the name of "The unity and integrity of the country, the indivisibility of the Republic." It was for that and for that alone, that he "prolonged the war." Wild and mad as he seemed to his enemies he can never have dreamed that France would be able to take the offensive or prevent the union of Germany. What he fought for was the national life of France.

Why did Prussia choose to "prolong the war?" After her victories, materially

decisive and morally crushing, it was impossible that France could for many a year be a danger to Germany. After Sedan, at the end of a war of some five weeks, she could have made a peace—Favre offered her the opportunity—which would have given her an enormous indemnity and military prestige greater than any in Europe. She chose to demand French provinces in order that she might have strategic advances in any future war and that France should be left to struggle maimed with intolerable humiliation. The campaign against the National Defence of Gambetta was in fact a campaign for the power to inflict a rankling incurable wound in France. If we believe in the inalienable rights of nationality we shall not lightly blame Gambetta for the “ruthless cruelty” and “the great sacrifices” of which Moltke complains.

Even in 1870 when the blatant faults of the government of the Second Empire and the plausible craft of Bismarck’s diplomacy deprived France of any effective help or even any warm sympathy from England, there were powerful voices raised in protest against the Prussian policy. The general opinion of England on the Government of National Defence, may be summed up in a sentence from a newspaper leader

of the time: "A capital convulsed and a *levée en masse* can make horrors more horrible, but not alter the award of destiny." It was indeed true, but not all the truth. One of those who saw more clearly the real issues was John Ruskin. His close association with the thought and work of Carlyle will sufficiently absolve him from any imputation of prejudice against Prussia. On October 8th, immediately after Gambetta had escaped from Paris to organize his campaign, *The Daily Telegraph* published a letter from Ruskin; which was in substance a solemn warning to Prussia, to England and to Europe. It was impressive then, for all its apocalyptic style. It is still more impressive now. After some compliments to the old virtues of Prussia, "let her look to it now," he wrote, "that her fame be not sullied. She is pressing her victory too far—dangerously far, as uselessly. The Nemesis of battle may indeed be near her: greater glory she cannot win by the taking of Paris nor the over-running of provinces. She only prolongs suffering, redoubles death, extends loss, incalculable and irremediable. But let her now give unconditional armistice, and offer terms that France can accept with honour, and she will bear such rank

among the nations as never yet shone on Christian history. For, as we ought to help France now, if we did anything—but, of course, there remains for us only neutrality, selling of coke and silence, if we have grace enough left to keep it—I have only broken mine to say that I am ashamed to speak as being one of a nation regardless of its honour, alike in trade and policy: poor yet not careful to keep even the treasure of probity; and rich without being able to afford the luxury of courage." Few of us can have much respect for Ruskin as a practical statesman. Who in 1914 will deny to that letter something of the inspiration of a prophet?

Almost at the same moment the cause of France received the support of another man, who was never found in arms for any cause but liberty and nationality. We may rule Garibaldi out of the spheres of high politics and strategy as a mere knight errant. No one has ever accused his knight errantry of blindness to the real issues of its warfare. He had his own causes of quarrel with France. In the early days of the war his sympathies were on the side of Germany. After the blockade of Paris he landed at Marseilles to offer himself for the National Defence.

The plan of Gambetta may be stated in a sentence. Behind a screen of armed peasantry, francs-tireurs and national guards regular armies were to be organized. Such warfare has always been attended with horrible cruelty. But when armies not content with defeating the ambitions of their enemy, press on to assail the national unity and life, such desperate warfare as this must be the consequence. For the misery which followed we cannot hold the francs-tireurs responsible.

Under the inspiration of Gambetta, France rose *en masse*. Considerable armies mustered at Rouen, at Evreux, at Besançon and in the departments beyond the Loire. Their composition was heterogeneous, and there was naturally a deficiency of capable officers. In drill and discipline they were no match for the German troops. It was hoped that war itself would give them training. They were not to venture upon pitched battles, but to worry the enemy by continual skirmishing and affairs of outposts. By the end of September the army of Evreux was annoying the German forces round Paris. An army of 30,000 men had been formed at Orleans and they held all the forest on the north of the Loire. The Prussian headquarters became uneasy.

This renaissance of French military strength was not counted upon in Moltke's plans. Orleans was a place of the highest strategical importance. "If Paris is the head of France," said Clausewitz, "Orleans is the heart." In the circumstances of the moment a French mobile force at Orleans was a dangerous menace. The army blockading Paris might find its communications broken. The Bavarian Corps of General von der Tann was sent off to Orleans in a hurry. He met no opposition till he reached Artenay, a little place twelve miles due north of Orleans. It is modestly famous in English history as the scene of the Battle of Herrings. In 1429, Sir John Fastolf, the original perhaps of Shakespeare's hero, was taking a convoy of salt fish, the Lenten food, to the English force besieging Orleans, when he was attacked by an army of French and Scotch. He beat them off, but a few months later on the same field ran away from Joan of Arc.

The French of 1870 had no Joan of Arc to lead them, and in their first battle they did not cover themselves with glory. They were resolutely attacked in front while cavalry threatened their flanks and they broke and fled. What else could have been expected of raw levies facing troops

which had conquered at Wörth? General la Motterouge their commander resolved to withdraw beyond the Loire and to cover his retreat he posted 15,000 in a strong defensive position on the north bank of the river. They taught the German troops that the new armies of France were not to be despised. "In an open field," says Moltke with grudging praise, the French force "would soon have been defeated; but in street-fighting under shelter of the houses unflinching personal courage is all that is needed, and even the recruits of the newly-created French army did not lack that." With a day of hard street fighting the recruits welcomed the Bavarian veterans and at the end of it General von der Tann was not in a hurry for more.

The French entrenched themselves on ground where a number of buildings and enclosures offered obstacles to attack. When they were driven from that position they retreated upon Orleans through a mile of villages, orchards and vineyards. Again and again the German advance was checked. It was not till nightfall that the town was won. The French rearguard made good their retreat across the river. The Germans had lost 900 men and taken 1,800 prisoners. They made no attempt

at pursuit. Moltke was not satisfied. The armies before Paris were indeed delivered from any risk of interrupted communications. But Moltke hoped for more substantial results. He had expected Von der Tann to push on fifty miles to the south, and destroy the arms which had been accumulated at Vierzon among the iron works of Berry. He hoped that there would be some attempt to beat up the quarters of the Government of National Defence seventy miles away at Tours. But Von der Tann preferred to stay in the neighbourhood of Orleans repairing bridges and railways. Though La Motterouge's 30,000 had been defeated, they were not much the worse for it and still in being. Another French army corps had suddenly been born in the neighbourhood of Blois and the Germans were afraid of others. Von der Tann is hardly to be blamed for venturing no further, but his inaction is the first symptom of the awkwardness of the German commanders in this new warfare. They would as ever obey orders and successfully accomplish a prescribed task. They showed no power of initiative, no enterprise in dealing with the strange conditions of this unorthodox war.

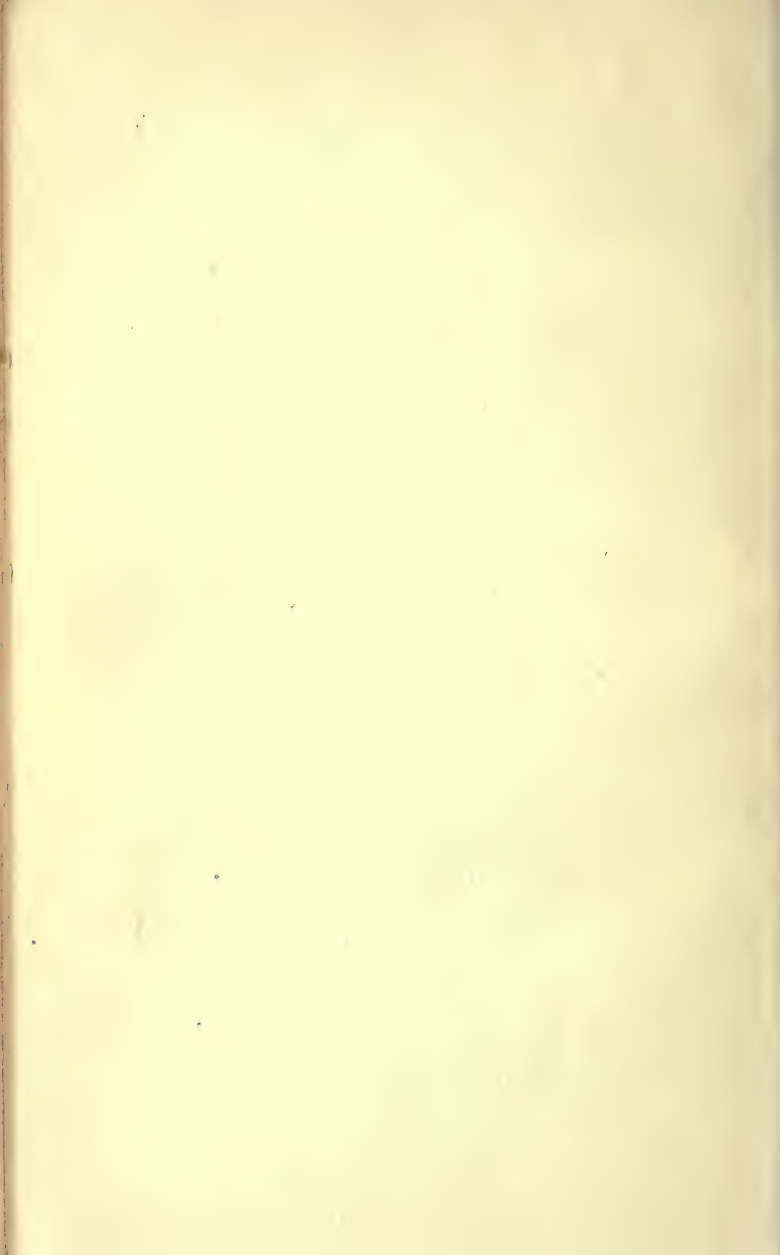
"If I stamp my foot on the ground,



A. Binet]

THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

[Paris



legions will start up." Gambetta might have allowed himself that boast. "The warlike energy of this remarkable man"—so Moltke stiffly salutes him—"had achieved the feat of placing 600,000 soldiers and 1,400 guns in the field in the course of a few weeks."

During October new army corps came into existence at Blois and at Gien on the Loire and at Nogent-le-Rotrou, near Chartres. All these forces and the first formed corps were under the command of General d'Aurelle de Paladines. In Picardy, Bourbaki mustered a large army. There was another at Rouen under Briand. Yet another on the south bank of the Seine. It will be seen that though the quality of officers and men might be poor and the plan of campaign, such as it was, incoherent, this ring of armies seriously threatened the German success.

The troops investing Paris were beset on every side by strong French forces. The Germans had the better of many small engagements, but they could gain no decisive success, and if they had left their positions to pursue the siege would have been abandoned. The Prussian headquarters began to look anxiously over their shoulders towards Metz. The sooner Bazaine surrendered the better. For the army of Prince Frederick Charles which was blockading him was

urgently needed to deal with these new waspish French forces. But Prince Frederick Charles could not be expected to come into action in the centre of France before the middle of November. There was reason to fear that all the French armies would make a combined advance on Paris some time in October.

Here we may well pause to note how the German conception of the laws of war has changed since 1870. It is acknowledged by all, and not least frankly by German writers, that the later phases of the campaign of 1870 were fought out with a brutality from which the earlier battles, murderous as they were, were altogether free. But even when the conflict had been embittered and cruelty, ruthless and wanton, was part of the daily work of armies there was still some restraint. Compare the case of Chateaudun in 1870, with that of Louvain yesterday. Chateaudun is a little town half-way between Paris and Tours. It was the scene of an insignificant action between a French rearguard and the Germans under General von Wittich. The townsfolk joined in the fight. Barricades were thrown up. House after house had to be stormed. The Germans had to fight hard and were roughly handled. They won in the end. What the German

officer of 1914 would have done to the hapless citizens we shudder to imagine. General von Wittich thought their offence would be sufficiently expiated by their defeat and a fine. But Germany has gone far on the path of culture since 1870.

Wittich then was operating on the south-west of Paris, in the neighbourhood of Chartres. On the other fronts the investing army was much harassed. So strong were the French forces around Amiens that the Germans could hardly keep them back along the line of the Oise, and from week to week the French became more formidable in numbers and discipline. To the south-east of Paris there was more fighting. Irregular troops held the forest of Fontainebleau, cut off the foraging parties of German cavalry and interfered with the transport of siege guns.

But Gambetta was not content. It was plain that such operations, however harassing, could not of themselves deliver Paris or restore the fortunes of France. A council of war at Tours resolved to seize Orleans. The next step in the campaign was not decided. If Orleans was captured it was to be the site of an entrenched camp for 200,000 men. General von der Tann divined that something was impending, but could not discover what it was. The

irregulars were active, the peasantry every day more hostile and his reconnaissances only informed that strong forces were closing round him. He did not dare hold on to Orleans, for in the forests about it his force would lose the advantage of its superior manœuvring power and its strong cavalry and artillery, while the half-trained hard fighting French masses would be at their best. He moved out of the town towards Chartres and took up a position in open country at Coulmiers. He had only 20,000 men to meet French forces estimated at 70,000 but the advantages of superior discipline, equipment, guns and cavalry gave some reason to hope that he could hold his ground. The Germans fought stubbornly and more than once the battle wavered. Admiral Jauréguiberry decided the issue of the day. The Germans had already yielded to the pressure of numbers and were retiring by brigades. But under the fire of their artillery the French advance was checked and flung back in great disorder. Then Jauréguiberry came upon the scene, rallied the shattered advance and drove back the counter attack. The Germans retreated swiftly covered by their cavalry and General von der Tann thought it wise to continue his march all through the

night. He saved his stores, but Orleans itself, an ammunition column and his hospitals fell into the hands of the French.

So the first important stroke in the campaign of National Defence was rewarded with a great success. The first thought of the generals of the Army of the Loire was to make good what they had won. Large earthworks were constructed round Orleans, and artillery was brought up from the naval arsenals at Cherbourg. The difficulties of the Prussian headquarters were now much diminished by the arrival of the army of Prince Frederick Charles which enabled them to put a large force in the field while still maintaining the siege of Paris. As soon as the surrender of Bazaine set him free the Red Prince marched westward with all speed. He found the roads broken up, National Guards and Franks-tireurs always ready to harass his line of march and the peasantry fiercely hostile. It was nearly the end of November before he could bring any force to bear upon Orleans.

Gambetta could not long be patient of inaction. At this point in the campaign begins that interference with generals in the field which has brought down upon him the wrath of military critics. No doubt it is in general undesirable for a civilian, even if he is a Gambetta, to

over-rule the decisions of generals and direct their movements. But Gambetta's generals for the most part could not be trusted to move at all without an impulse from him. It is probable that he made disastrous blunders. But after all whatever vigour there was in the National Defence, whatever it did effect for France is to be traced to him and his plans. General d'Aurelle de Paladines did not want to move from Orleans. Gambetta telegraphed orders for an advance of the 15th Corps on Pithiviers and of the 20th on Beaune-la-Rolande. Then both were to march on Fontainebleau and Paris. In vain the generals protested that this would mean fighting superior forces of Germans in an open country. Gambetta wanted to relieve Paris, and it was plain that an army sitting down in its entrenchments at Orleans would never do that.

Around Beaune-la-Rolande there followed much confused fighting. Both sides suffered serious losses, and both could boast of successes. It was obvious to a cool judgment that while the quality of the German troops had deteriorated since the first battles of the war, the new French levies were not likely without generalship of supreme capacity to win any victories of sufficient importance to loosen the

German grip on Paris. Yet Gambetta did not relax his efforts. Some time before the fight at Beaune-la-Rolande a balloon had been sent up from Paris to announce that on November 29th General Ducrot would lead 100,000 men with 400 guns against the German lines of investment and try to join hands with the Army of the Loire. The winds were unkind and in 1870 balloons were not dirigible. This one the winds chose to carry to Norway before they gave it a chance to descend on neutral ground. Thence the dispatch was forwarded to Tours. The delay had been so great that Gambetta resolved to push his armies on at all costs. If Ducrot's sortie had been made according to programme it was certain that he must be vigorously engaged before any help could reach him from the Loire. For the army there had no chance of beginning its march before December 1st.


The process of getting it to move throws light upon Gambetta's difficulties with his generals. His deputy, Freycinet, had orders to submit to the council of war a plan for the advance of the whole army. If this was rejected he was to produce a decree which superseded the Commander-in-Chief. The council of war consented to advance. On December 1st the French gained some

substantial success. News reached Tours that the sortie from Paris had also been fortunate. It was believed that the Germans were about to suffer a crushing blow.

But the Army of the Loire was still many a mile from Paris and Prince Frederick Charles had strong forces still unshaken. On the next day there was fresh fighting further west about Loigny and Pourpry. At first General Chanzy gained a good deal of ground from Von der Tann's Bavarians. The French right was checked and repulsed by Prussian troops. When night fell, both armies had lost heavily, but the general advance of the French was arrested. Moltke decided that "the moment had come to put an end to the incessant danger to the investing lines from the south." He ordered Prince Frederick Charles to march all his forces upon Orleans.

Without much fighting the French were driven back. The superior manœuvring power and the vastly stronger artillery of the Germans were used with resolution, and upon a coherent plan. Neither one nor the other was evident in the dispositions of General d'Aurelle de Paladines. His chief anxiety seemed to be to retreat—to retreat anyhow and anywhere. Rather than run the risk of blocking the bridge over the Loire at Orleans he resolved to

divide his force. Only one corps was to retreat on Orleans itself. General Crouzat was ordered to retire on Gien, General Chanzy on Beaugency. If the Germans had gained a crushing victory they could hardly have scattered the French more completely. Who can wonder that Gambetta interfered with the discretion of his generals? As soon as he heard of this ruinous scheme, he issued peremptory orders to hold Orleans at all costs. It was then too late. The army of the Loire was scattered. With the one corps which he had reserved for the retreat through Orleans d'Aurelle did indeed make an attempt at checking the German march, and these troops fought gallantly to repair the blunders of their commander. They "defended every tenable spot," made barricades and rifle pits around the railway station and the deep cutting through which the main road runs, and held them persistently against overwhelming forces. It was not till December 4th that the Germans took possession of the town. In the course of their operations they nearly took Gambetta too. He was in a military train steaming from Tours to Orleans which had reached the neighbourhood of Meung. His mission, of course, was to put some of his own energy



and determination into his generals. Fortunately for himself and France he never reached Orleans. The artillery of a German cavalry division opened fire upon his train. The engine was promptly reversed and hurried the train back to Tours at its best speed. Thanks to the errors of its commander the scattered French Army of the Loire had lost 20,000 men and inflicted small damage on the Germans. General d'Aurelle was dismissed, and what remained of his troops given to General Bourbaki.

Winter was now adding to the horrors of the war. At the beginning of December a bitter frost came down upon northern and central France. "It was almost impossible to move, excepting along the high roads and they were frozen so hard that it was often necessary to dismount and lead the horses." After the disaster at Orleans the war took on yet more of the character of a guerilla campaign. The French regular troops often made a feeble resistance, readily abandoned their supplies and allowed themselves to be taken prisoners. On the other hand the country people resented more and more fiercely the German exactions and the German cruelty—"they pillage terribly" an English war correspondent reported, with the significant addition "I am

obliged to keep silence on many points, or I should be sent away from the army."

Gambetta still would not give up hope. His lieutenant Freycinet urged Bourbaki to advance with what was left of the Army of the Loire. Bourbaki declared that if he did, "not a gun, not a man of his three corps would ever be seen again." Gambetta hurried to the camp at Bourges, but when he saw the condition of the troops even he had to confess that they were incapable of action. "C'est encore ce que j'ai vu de plus triste," "the saddest sight I have seen yet," said he, as he walked among the wretched regiments.

General Chanzy, whom Moltke pronounced the most capable of all the French leaders in this phase of the war, infused some spirit and discipline into the corps which he commanded. They were operating in the valley of the Loire between Tours and Orleans and they offered an obstinate resistance to the German advance. Only when he heard that Bourbaki could do nothing to help him did Chanzy fall back westward. The immediate result of that retreat was the removal of the seat of government from Tours to Bordeaux.

A third of France was now in the possession of the Germans. Between the Somme and the Loire they had no organized opposition to fear. A halt was made to rest,

reinforce and re-equip their troops. Then three armies took the field. The 1st was based on Beauvais, the 2nd on Orleans, the 3rd on Chartres. Away in the south-east, Belfort the one remaining frontier fortress of France was invested. The sporadic efforts of the force raised by Garibaldi and other weak corps were fiercely checked.

France still had forces in the field numerically formidable. But what they suffered in the bitter winter weather from lack of supplies and disease is not to be told. General Chanzy's force was under canvas in a snow-covered country about Le Mans. Its hospitals were full of wounded when small-pox broke out. Yet the army of Le Mans remained more efficient than Bourbaki's beyond the Loire, or Faidherbe's in the north. Chanzy hoped for a concerted campaign by these three forces. Paris was at its last gasp. Trochu reported that without help he could not hope to hold out. Gambetta was at Lyons. Chanzy sent a staff officer to him to urge that only a swift combined advance of the three armies on Paris could help France. Gambetta's reply might have been admirable as part of a public speech. It was not a useful contribution to the strategy of the campaign. "You have decimated the Mecklenburgers," he wrote,

"the Bavarians are wiped out, the rest of the army is already demoralized and worn out. Let us persevere and we shall drive these hordes back from French soil empty-handed."

What was an unhappy general to make of that? Chanzy determined to march on Paris alone. The Germans anticipated him. On New Year's Day, 1871, Prince Frederick Charles received orders to advance immediately on Le Mans and his army was strengthened by reinforcements from the 3rd Army at Chartres. The country was difficult, smooth ice and snow drifts hampered every movement, and the French offered a stubborn opposition. The sufferings of both armies were severe. In the battle of Le Mans which lasted over three days, Germans and French alike won the honour which is due to desperate courage and stern resolution. At first the French had some advantage, for their position was strong and General von Alvensleben had only a part of the German forces upon the field. When Prince Frederick Charles heard that Alvensleben was being attacked in flank and rear, he hurried Voights-Rhetz up to the field with the 10th Corps. There was fierce fighting hand to hand. A couple of French guns were taken by a charge of infantry. By January 12th the French

officers began to find it impossible to make their men advance. Body and mind could do no more. The battle had been fought among deep snow drifts, sometimes in fog so thick that, says Moltke, the German artillery could only direct their fire by the map. The French were poorly clad and poorly fed. They were defeated by physical exhaustion rather than the tactics of the Germans. On the morning of the 12th, Chanzy ordered a general retreat on Alençon. He had lost 6,200 men killed and wounded, and 20,000 prisoners. His army remained in existence but as an offensive force it had ceased to be of importance. With the defeat of Le Mans it may be said that the cause of the National Defence was lost.

In the north, General Faidherbe, who like Chanzy might in happier circumstances have won a considerable reputation, had given the Germans some trouble. In an enterprising fight at Bapaume he forced the Germans to abandon the siege of Péroune. Reinforcements came up, the siege was renewed, and the place was taken. Then Faidherbe received orders from Gambetta to attract to himself as much of the German forces as possible, so that a sortie from Paris might be attempted with better hope of success. This, of course, was the same sortie which Chanzy had

hoped to assist before the battle of Le Mans. Faidherbe's advance and his defeat are to be considered as the parallel operations in the northern theatre of war to the affair of Le Mans. Faidherbe advanced with some 40,000 men, and General von Goeben met him at St. Quentin with 32,000. The French fought hard from morning till dusk of the short January day and Goeben had to bring his last reserves into action before the French, in grave danger on their left flank and utterly exhausted, slowly fell back from the stubbornly held positions. The Germans had suffered heavy loss but they had put the French Army of the North out of action.

Meanwhile, what of Bourbaki? We left him at Bourges with his troops in such a miserable condition that he could not advance a mile. He was destined for a new campaign in the south-east. The plan was devised by Freycinet, but it must have had Gambetta's approval. The greater part of Bourbaki's army was to go by railway to Beaune, join Garibaldi's force, and so making up a body of 70,000 men, occupy Dijon. Meanwhile another 50,000 were to be gathered at Besançon, and it was believed that the mere existence of these armies would raise the siege of Belfort without a blow, cut the

German communications in all directions and give Faidherbe a chance of new activity.

“Hope told a flattering tale.” From a military point of view the most striking quality of the plan was its sanguine complexion. To some extent however fate was kind. The movement of troops escaped the notice of the German intelligence department, and the first Moltke heard of it was a telegram from Belfort, which informed him that it had been accomplished. He took steps at once to form a new army in the south, but General von Werder who commanded the troops besieging Belfort could not at once be reinforced. Bourbaki’s army vastly outnumbered the forces which Werder could command, but he was not the man to use them effectively. A fair general of division, he was tried too high by such a task as this. He tried to drive Werder away from the weakened forces which had been left to maintain the investment of Belfort. After some manœuvring and a little fighting “the French in three corps were as near to Belfort as the Germans were with three divisions.” But Bourbaki did not press his advantage. It seems that he intended to surround Werder’s inferior force and win a new, if a minor Sedan. But neither the general nor the troops were capable of such a victory.

The plans were bad and the marching was bad.

Von Werder may be excused for a fit of nervousness. He expected every hour an attack from vastly superior forces. He could not move without abandoning the siege of Belfort. To stay where he was seemed likely to involve the destruction of his army. He telegraphed to headquarters "earnestly praying" that they would decide for him whether the siege of Belfort must be continued. Moltke, of course, bade him hold on and accept battle, but exonerated him from "the moral responsibility for the consequences of a possibly disastrous issue." Before he received this reply, Werder had pulled himself together and resolved to fight.

He need not have been alarmed. There was a three days' battle before him from January 15th to 17th, but no desperate fighting. The French attacked and drove his right wing back upon Belfort. The besieged fortress celebrated this success with a *feu de jote* but made no attempt at a sortie. Further French advances were not pressed. The physical strength of the troops was failing, their morale, not very high at the first, had been shattered by heavy losses, and the generals of division had no confidence in Bourbaki's scheme of further enveloping

movements. Then came the news that Mantouffell was coming down upon them from the north. There was nothing for it but retreat.

Detaching a brigade to deal with Garibaldi's force at Dijon—some hard fighting there saw the Germans lose the only standard taken from them in all the war—Mantouffell struck for Besançon and cut French communications with their bases of supply in the west. On January 24th, Bourbaki's generals told him that scarcely half their men remained and these readier to run away than fight. The Commissary General reported only four days' supplies. There was nothing to do but retreat on the Swiss frontier. Gambetta, or at least Freycinet, still believed that Bourbaki could break his way through and from Bordeaux provided him with plans. What confidence in himself the unhappy general still had was destroyed. Under the strain of reports of disaster from all sides, and of the growing misery of his army, he attempted his own life. General Clinchant succeeded to the command. Some confusion over the terms of a limited armistice which had been arranged in Paris increased his difficulties. On February 1st he marched his columns across the Swiss frontier.

For five months after the crushing disaster of Sedan France had prolonged the

war at a frightful cost in life and suffering. She won for herself no better terms of peace. After Pontarlier, Bismarck asked neither less nor more than he had asked of Wimpffen on the night of Sedan. It is literally true that all the energy of Gambetta, all the sacrifices which France made at his call had not in Moltke's phrase "affected the result of the war." But those who understand in what the strength of national life consists will not admit that the campaign of National Defence was not worth fighting. If France had surrendered on the morrow of Sedan she would have saved for herself thousands of men. She would have lost her honour. She would have admitted that the old military prowess of France was dead and that she had become a nation ready to cower at the first shock of disaster. By the campaign of National Defence she won for herself out of the midst of disaster the respect of the world. She preserved for the generations to come the faith in her greatness and her power to rise superior to any defeat. The swift restoration of national strength after 1871 amazed the world and alarmed Germany. It would never have been achieved but for the desperate struggle of La Défense Nationale. The vitality

of the Third Republic springs from that stupendous effort. And not yet, not till the mad onslaught of the new German militarism has learnt what waits it in the campaign of 1914 from the resolution of the new France shall we be able to estimate the achievement of the National Defence of 1871.

CHAPTER XI

THE SIEGE OF PARIS

NOT long before 1870, a committee of the House of Commons investigating some question of high finance asked Lord Overstone "what would happen if London were occupied by a hostile army?" To which Lord Overstone blandly replied: "London must not be occupied by a hostile army." The answer was recognized as adequate. In the same spirit the Government of National Defence and the people of Paris received the menace of the German siege.

We have seen how the Germans in their advance on the city were not checked by any opposition and how Moltke was able to begin the investment without fear of the operations of any French force. On September 17th when the German lines closed around the city the only French armies were Bazaine's helpless force at Metz, and the corps which by a helter-skelter retreat Vinoy had contrived to save from the German advance and fling

into Paris. At first then and for some time to come the German headquarters were able to devote the whole of their available force to the reduction of the city.

It is inevitable that we should make some comparison between the conditions of 1870 and 1914. As these lines are written comes the news that a German army has again forced its way to the ramparts of Paris. What is to be the next step in German strategy will be known before this sentence is read. But whatever the course of events in the war now being waged, it must be obvious that the Germans in 1914 have attempted a campaign which is wholly unlike Moltke's. He was able to force decisive battles in the first few days of the war. The German armies of 1914 penetrated to the fortifications of Paris without inflicting any grave injury upon the opposing forces. Siege, investment, blockade, assault could not be undertaken at once without grave peril from strong, well-equipped and undefeated armies so situated as to be capable of developing a dangerous offensive. We need not again emphasize the even more important if more obvious part that in 1914 the fate of Germany depends at least as much upon battles in the North Sea

and in Eastern Europe as upon the war in France.

Before these lines are published it may well be that their headlong daring will have forced the first phase of the campaign to a decisive issue. Whether that be to the German advantage or not, history will nevertheless record that while the arrival before Paris in 1870 meant the reaping of the harvest of victory, in 1914 it meant only the first struggle to clear the ground.

If we limit our view still further and examine only the case of Paris we find differences still more striking. In 1914 Paris has defences which, however they stand the test of war, are reputed to establish it the strongest fortress in the world. Every preparation has been made by a strong government for a stubborn resistance. The garrison is sufficient and composed of well-trained troops who come fresh and undefeated to their work. In 1870 the fortifications, though in Moltke's opinion they "effectively protected the city from being taken by storm," had not been designed to cope with the artillery of the period. They were constructed under Louis Philippe, whose reign had ended more than twenty years before, and no

attempt had been made to improve them. In the interim the range of guns had been doubled or trebled. So the outworks of Paris were "at so short a distance from the main work that the latter could easily be reached by the fire of heavy batteries." The garrison of 1870 though nominally very numerous was for the most part of small military value. There were 100,000 National Guards raised in the city itself who were almost worse than useless from their deficiencies in equipment and discipline. There were 115,000 Gardes-Mobiles from the provinces who were not much better. The effective force of regulars numbered less than 80,000 and these were disheartened and in some degree disorganized by the early events of the campaign and hurried retreats. Provisions had to be furnished for 2,000,000 people. Just before the investment 3,000 oxen, 6,000 pigs and 180,000 sheep had been brought within the lines besides large quantities of other stores. But it was calculated that the supplies of food were only sufficient for six weeks.

It has been calculated that for the investment of Paris to-day some half-a-million men would be required. In 1870 the circumference of the fortifications was far

smaller. Places far outside Paris, such as Versailles, which was the German headquarters, are now within the defences. But even in 1870 the Germans had to blockade a line of fifty miles. An attempt to carry the fortifications by storm was, as we have seen, pronounced by Moltke impracticable. An overwhelming bombardment was for the time impossible. "It may safely be asserted," says Moltke, and the dictum is at least interesting in 1914, "that an attack on a large fortified place in the heart of the enemy's country must always be impossible so long as the invader is not master of the railways or waterways to bring in endless supplies of the necessary material. Its mere conveyance by ordinary highways, even for a short distance, is a gigantic undertaking." The development of mechanical transport has no doubt made some change in the conditions which Moltke knew. But siege guns are still difficult things to move. In 1870 the Germans for all their crushing victories had the control of only one railway and even that had been seriously interrupted by the destruction of a tunnel. "Thus a bombardment was in the first instance not to be thought of, and in any case the object of it would not be to destroy Paris." What would the German

commanders of 1914 think of that weak humanity?—"but to exert a final pressure on the inhabitants."

On September 19th Versailles was captured, and the blockade was complete on all sides. Six army corps were drawn up on a line of eleven miles ready to meet any attempt at a sortie. Then Favre made an attempt at negotiations. Bismarck, of course, would hear of no discussion on the basis of "not an inch of territory." He declined even to grant an armistice except on intolerable conditions. The blockade went on. The Germans were comfortably lodged in the deserted villages, but had for some time difficulty in obtaining supplies. "The fugitive inhabitants had driven off their cattle and destroyed their stores: only the wine-cellars seemed inexhaustible. For the first few days all the food needed had to be drawn from the commissariat stores, but ere long the cavalry succeeded in obtaining fresh provisions. High prices and good discipline made traffic safe." Such is the official German version. Impartial observers tell another tale.

"Their system of warfare"—wrote Mr. Gibson Bowles—"is based throughout upon terrorism exercised upon those who cannot defend themselves, in order to awe those

who can, precisely the same system in fact that is pursued by brigands of all countries. They fight, indeed, when they cannot help it, but when they can they prefer to take hostages and levy requisitions upon civilians, and now that they have met in Paris a force capable of resistance they do not scruple to take their revenge upon women and children."

How General Trochu the governor of Paris "had a plan" which was to deliver the city has become a proverb. Many a plan was tried. What fortune attended the efforts from without we have seen. They were supported by gallant efforts from within. But for the first half of October the garrison attempted no more than a daily cannonade which effected nothing of importance. "If one of the gigantic Minié shells happened to fall on a picquet the destruction was of course terrific; but on the whole they did little execution." The French fire, however, wrecked the beautiful palace of St. Cloud, the château of Meudon, and the porcelain factory of Sèvres.

On October 18th, roused by some German movements made with the object of strengthening the blockade, General Vinoy led 25,000 men to the first sortie. He forced his way to Châtillon but there found

considerable forces in front of him, and as he had not hoped to do more than test the German lines he withdrew at dusk behind the forts. Nothing more of importance was attempted till the news of the French victory at Coulmiers reached Paris. Then spirits rose high in the city. It was believed that the investing armies would be compelled to detach large forces to deal with the danger in the south, and elaborate arrangements were made to break through the weakened lines. The garrison was reorganized. The untrustworthy National Guard, perhaps 130,000 men, were to hold the inner defences and keep order in the city. 70,000 of the Gardes-Mobiles with a stiffening of better troops were to carry on minor operations against the besieging lines, while the main attacks were delivered by the field army of General Ducrot, some 100,000 men with 300 guns. On November 30th was fought the most important engagement of the siege. The sortie was directed towards the south, because relief was to be expected from that region. It happened that on the south the lines of the investment were at their weakest. The main sortie was cleverly prefaced by minor attacks in all directions so that the Germans

were at a loss to know where serious work was intended. In the morning twilight a strong force of Ducrot's army moved out of Paris, and crossing the Marne by temporary bridges, occupied the peninsula between the Marne and the Seine as far as Champigny and Bry. Other troops moved along the north bank of the Marne to Neuilly and, bringing artillery into action, under protection of its fire constructed bridges and crossed to join their comrades on the southern bank. But once over they could make no further progress. Hard fighting won not an inch of ground. The French began to entrench themselves and a truce was arranged. On December 2nd the fighting was renewed, but neither side gained much ground. It had however become obvious that the French would not be able to break through, and on the 4th as the German patrols rode out towards Bry and Champigny they found that the French had withdrawn. This sortie of Champigny, the hardest fought attempt to break through the blockade, cost the Germans more than 6,000 men, the French nearly 12,000.

The first news which Paris had of the defeat of the army of d'Aurelle de Paladines and the German capture of Orleans

came it is said in a letter from Moltke. After that disaster nothing was to be gained by sorties to southward. It was resolved to make the next attempt to the north through Le Bourget. In the mist of a December morning—it was December 21st—the German advanced post at Le Bourget, one battalion and four companies, found itself under fire from the forts, several batteries and an armoured train. Large numbers of French infantry rushed to the attack, and a stubborn fight followed. German reinforcements came up, and after some murderous hand-to-hand work the French were repulsed. That was the end of the sortie, for the cannonade which followed was a mere display of fireworks.

By this time Paris had been invested three months, but owing to the lack of heavy artillery no siege works had been constructed. The difficulties of bringing it up did not diminish with the growing severity of the winter. Both wagons and horses were lacking, and the roads were not fit for a traffic in siege guns. By the end of the year, however, German energy had gained a partial victory over these troubles, and 100 guns of the heaviest calibre known to 1870 were in position to open fire on the southern fortifications.

The siege of Paris is to be dated from September 19th, 1870, but we have to reckon the bombardment from January 5th, 1871. The French forts attacked were Issy, Vanves, Montrouge and Mont Valérien, and in number of guns the French had the advantage. The Germans were superior in rapidity of fire. Some of the forts were much shattered after ten days' bombardment, and the guns at Issy and Vanves almost silenced. Though the German shells were chiefly directed against the forts and ramparts, an attempt was made to terrorize the city. The main points of attack were "the Luxembourg, the Invalides, and the ambulance of the Val de Grace. A number of women, children, and inoffensive citizens were killed, but the Parisians soon got used to the shells, and the cry of 'Gare l'obus !' It is computed that 6,000 shells were thrown into Paris in the twelve days, and that the deaths due to them were 296."

One more sortie was attempted. There was now only one front on which large bodies of troops could be brought into action, the region to the south of the city in the neighbourhood of Mont Valérien and the peninsula of Gennevilliers. On January 19th a large force marched out under

Vinoy, Bellemare and Ducrot. At first they made easy progress, for the morning was foggy and the German patrols had not observed the advance. Then the 4th corps of the Germans was roused, the Crown Prince sent a strong force of Bavarians and the Landwehr Guard into the fight. German artillery came into action, and about midday the French were checked. A fresh attack brought no further success. Late in the afternoon orders were given for a retreat.

After this final repulse, the bombardment of the city continued upon three sides, north, south and west. At the end of a week the damage to the fortifications was great. It became probable that the shattered works would no longer be defensible if the Germans chose to attempt an assault. Even more perilous than the condition of the fortifications was the condition of citizens and soldiers. When the blockade was begun there had been provisions for six weeks. The siege had lasted four months. The people were on the brink of starvation. A pound of ham sold for 16s., a pound of butter for 20s. Horses, dogs, and even cats and rats had long been used as food. The sufferings of hunger were multiplied by the bitter cold and



WILLIAM I.



the scarcity of fuel. Disease came down upon the crowded city. In four months 64,200 people died of small-pox. There is here no room for pictures of the misery of that winter. From a brief, cold narrative of the facts it must be sufficiently apparent that Paris only thought of surrender when she had borne all that life can bear, when prolonged resistance could only mean a fruitless sacrifice of two million human bodies on the altar of war.

On January 23rd, Jules Favre came to Versailles to negotiate an armistice. The triumph of Germany was complete. Five days before, in the Hall of Mirrors of that grandiose pile which Louis XIV. reared as a temple of his own glory at Versailles, the King of Prussia had been proclaimed German Emperor. "Blood and iron" had done its work. With some searchings of heart but with outward enthusiasm the great states of southern Germany admitted the supremacy of the King of Prussia, their leader in this triumphant war. The new Emperor announced, in words provided for him by Bismarck, his resolution "to aid at all times the growth of the Empire, not by the conquests of the sword, but by the goods and gifts of peace in the sphere of national prosperity, freedom and

culture." How that resolution has been translated by the ruling classes of Prussia, how faithfully it has been kept by his grandson the world knows well enough.

For Paris and France there was of course no mercy. Favre could only obtain an armistice on condition that all the forts were given up and the ramparts disarmed. During the armistice, which was prolonged till March 12th, a National Assembly was elected and met at Bordeaux. Though Gambetta remained intractable, it was soon clear that the voice of the majority was for peace. Thiers was elected "Chief of the Executive" and sent to Versailles to conclude the negotiations.

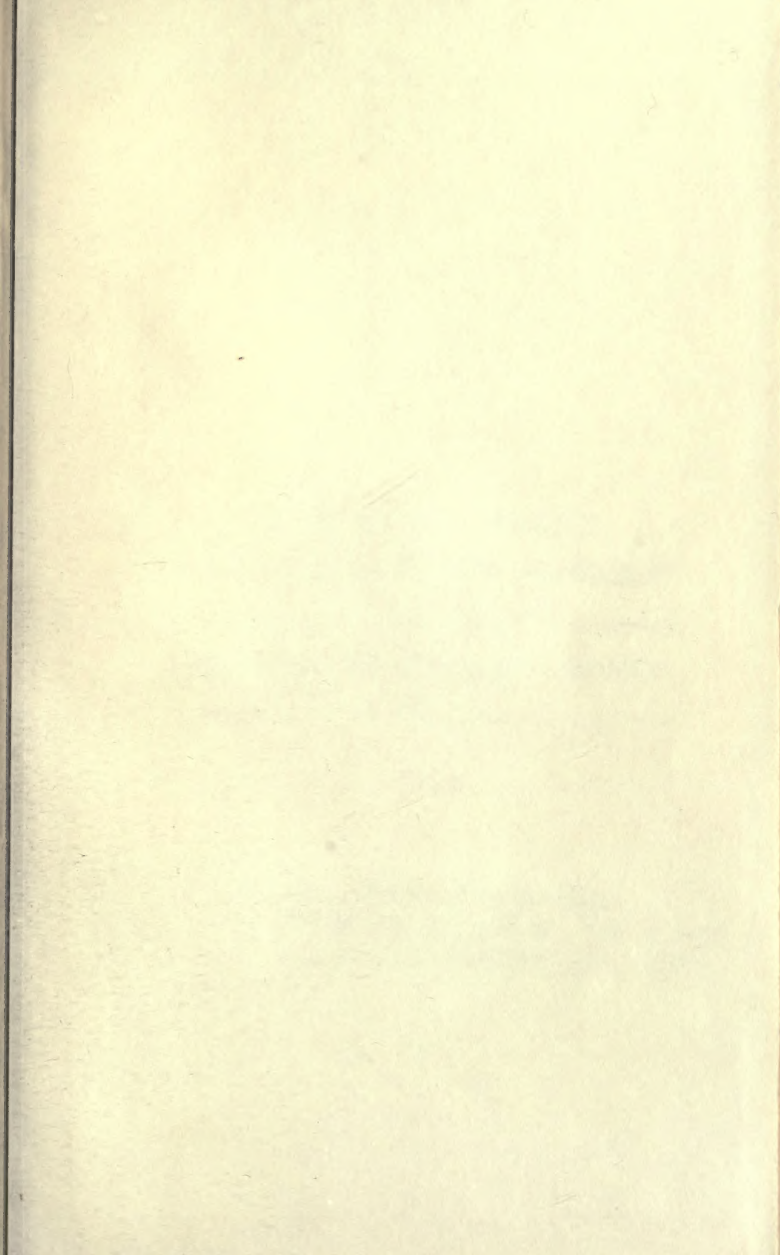
Bismarck exacted his price. The whole of Alsace save Belfort, a fifth of Lorraine including Metz, £200,000,000 and the triumphal entry of the German troops into Paris were the terms forced from Thiers' helpless hands. France was to be mutilated, enfeebled, and above all the shame of her humiliation was to be branded upon her. There is some reason to believe that in after years Bismarck allowed himself doubts whether it had been true statesmanship to tear the frontier provinces from France. Not from any kindness for the feeling of the people thus ruthlessly

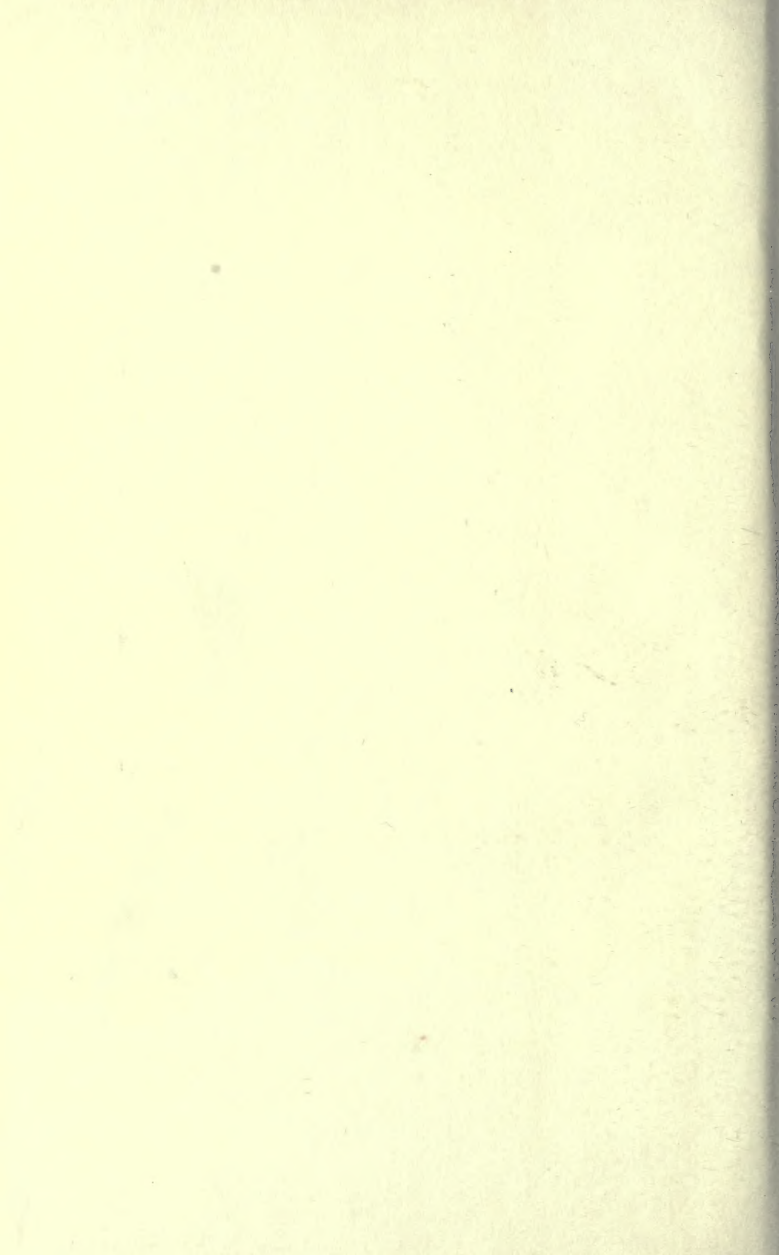
compelled to change their allegiance. It was nothing to him that the great mass of them were strongly opposed to German rule, and that more than 50,000 preferred to abandon home and property and go into exile rather than be subjects of the German empire. A Prussian statesman, heir to the traditions of Frederic the Great, could have no qualms at violating the principle of nationality. But if all things were lawful to Bismarck, all things were certainly not expedient. There are odd hints to be found in his queer, frank conversations—with Crispi for example—that he sometimes doubted whether the acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine was worth to Germany what it cost her—the steady hostility of France. For if the most obvious result of the Franco-German war has been the growth of German power and arrogance, there is another not less important to the world, the resolute recuperation of the French people. From the downfall of the first Napoleon to the downfall of the second France never had a policy, or rather, she had by fits and starts a score. From the disasters of 1870 to our own time she has had but one—to make herself so strong that never again should she be the victim unallied and unprepared of German arms. If we choose to seek

more deeply into the history of the war and its causes and its effects, we may find one more result more important than all this. The war was born of faith in the gospel of blood and iron, in the doctrine that might is right, that military power and material strength are the only forces which can make or mar national destiny. The crushing victories of Germany confirmed her in that faith. She has proclaimed in and out of season, with a brutal arrogance and with a comical *naïveté* her resolution to stand by it. For the sake of it she has cast down the gauntlet to civilization. Now we have upon us a war which must decide whether Germany can escape the doom which ever since nationality became a principle of civilization, has stricken down all powers of her faith, or whether the old and proven laws of national life and national honour are still endowed with the old inexorable sanction.









DM 9.12.85

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

DC
290
B25

Bailey, Henry Christopher
Forty years after, the story
of the Franco-German war, 1870

